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The Catholic Revival in Mexico

By

RICHARD PATTEE

and

THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE

A Report of the Inter-American Committee

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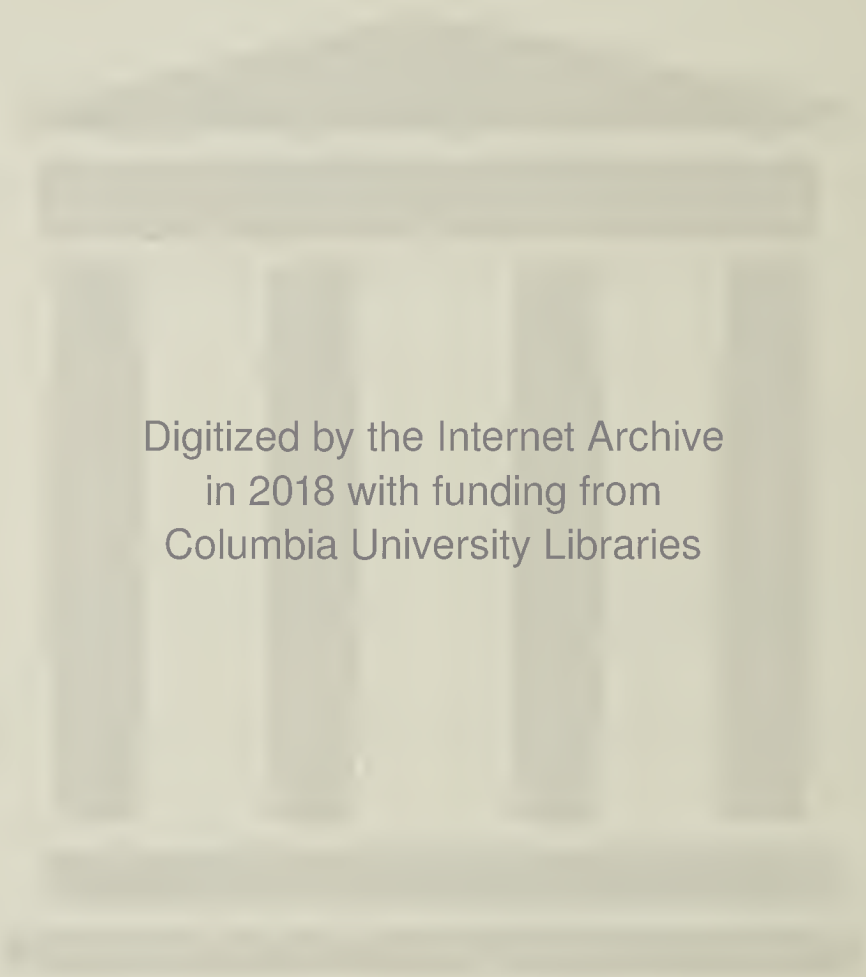

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I. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN MEXICO: A SUMMARY

IN the pamphlet report, *An Introduction to Mexico,* published in 1936 under the auspices of the Catholic Association for International Peace, by Anna Dill Gamble, Father Raymond McGowan and the Latin American Committee of the Association, a brief description is offered of the religious persecution in Mexico as of that date. Reference is made to the ebb and flow of persecution, which makes it particularly difficult to assign specific dates to the movement or conceive of it as a state of affairs which rises, comes to a climax and abates with some sort of solution actually reached. The Church-State controversy in Mexico has, to be sure, a long and not too honorable past. It must be fitted into the broad picture of the more or less perpetual crisis of the Mexican state; the intense philosophical and economic liberalism of many leaders of the past century and the pathetic effort to adapt an Indian, agricultural country to the pattern of modern, industrial society. The contradictions, paradoxes and incredible contingencies which fill every page of Mexican history, flow from these apparently unrelated but convergent causes.

From the religious point of view, independent Mexico was born under an unfortunate star. In no other Latin American country did independence come about in as strange and unpredictable a way as in this country. In other Latin American countries a minimum of logic presided at the birth of independence. In Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia and elsewhere, independence was the inevitable result of the process of events from the invasion of Spain, the imposition of Joseph Bonaparte and the hostile attitude of the Spanish *juntas,* which left those in Hispanic America no other course than to defend their own sovereignty.

The Mexican movement for independence took place at two different periods with no relation one to the other. The personalities, causes and events were quite different. The uprising of 1810 under Hidalgo, later Morelos, and finally the stragglers who carried on until 1815, bears no direct relation, personal or ideological,[1] to the actual independence of 1821. The slight connecting

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1 The ideology in question is that of 19th century secularism, i.e., the divorce of religion from economic and political life. For a fuller discussion of this, see: *Latin America and the U. S.,* Part III; *Introduction to Mexico,* Parts VII, VIII, IX. C. A. I. P. Reports. Washington.

thread of Vicente Guerrero is scarcely of sufficient importance to merge the two, although the ideology of nineteenth century secularism kept its followers and finally won out. The character of Mexican society in 1820 makes it clear why in many circles the announcement of the restoration of the Spanish constitution of 1820 should cause a veritable panic. This document was liberal —in the strictly nineteenth century concept of liberalism. The conservative classes of New Spain were not prone to welcome this innovation with any enthusiasm. In 1819 Mexico was in relative peace. In 1820 the spark which set off the revolution came from the mother country and we witness the queer spectacle of a supposed colony (which it assuredly was not in the strict sense) rebelling against the home land in order to prevent the dissemination of revolutionary doctrine. This, of course, fits into the general picture of Hispanic American independence, which has been so hopelessly distorted. We have always been led to believe that independence came because everyone was reading Montesquieu and was agog at the daring of Rousseau. We have been flattered in the United States to think that Tom Paine was the bedside companion of practically every literate Latin American of the early nineteenth century. Fortunately much of this nonsense has been blasted. We see now a society which, because of numerous circumstances, was relatively placid, not uninformed as to what was going on, devoted to the reigning house in Madrid and not particularly keen about the ideas coming out of France. We find what is even more remarkable, that many of the functionaries in Madrid were much more imbued with these ideas from the other side of the Pyrenees than were the Latin Americans, and the result was that in Latin America there was considerable concern about the matter. After all, Francisco de Miranda, noble adventurer and agitator that he was, found that no one supported him when he landed with a flourish on the coasts of Venezuela to bring freedom and enlightenment to his people. The benighted Latin Americans before 1810 were not all suffused with a nervous eagerness for liberation.

The character of the Constitution of 1820 annoyed and irritated the clergy. The peninsular Spaniards in Mexico were divided between liberals and anti-liberals. We have, for instance, the comment of the public official, José Hipólito Odoardo, who in 1820, in addressing the Spanish Minister of Justice, remarked that if the Constitution of 1820 were promulgated in Mexico, the consequence would be the irreparable loss of that country. General Dávila, who commanded the forces in Vera Cruz, in swearing

allegiance to the new constitution, announced to the assembled multitudes that they might now expect independence at any time. Spanish liberalism, in a word, produced the actual break and not so-called Spanish oppression. The work of Agustín de Iturbide in bringing about the consummation of independence need not be outlined here. Suffice it to say that this royalist officer of great audacity, verve and spirit set out to finish off the few remaining rebels under Guerrero, won the confidence of the Viceroy and proceded to enter into a pact with the rebel chieftain. Iturbide formulated his ideas of the future of Mexico in the famous Plan of Iguala and, aside from the fact that his ability to win over opinions made Mexican independence possible, he created an abyss in public opinion that has continued to the present time.

This historical analysis has no other purpose than to explain that the religious controversy in Mexico goes back and back, into the origins of the nation itself. There is no moment when one can say of independent Mexico: this is where the Church and State found themselves estranged. The evil, so to speak, was consubstantial with the formation of modern Mexico. Iturbide created an empire one of whose principles was the defense of the Catholic faith. He was a relatively moderate man, who saw that nothing could be worse than to erect a state based on hostility to the Indian, to the Spanish or to the Church. His three points still remain as a fairly sensible statement of the basis of a balanced Mexico. His doctrine was rejected just as he was rejected. His monarchism had much of the quixotic in it, perhaps. His effort to create a royalty out of nothing but good will was doomed to failure. His withdrawal, after a year of tumultuous relations with a recalcitrant congress, laid the way wide open to the worst kind of demagoguery. The place of the Church under Iturbide's scheme was changed. Iturbide himself was practically extirpated from Mexican memory. One of the curious anomalies of a paradoxical country is that its founder has been officially cast out of its national history as something unclean. It is not that the Empire was overthrown because of its clerical support. It is because of other factors that soon made themselves known that the clergy and hierarchy were assumed to be synonymous with the Empire and all its works. The cleavage of "liberals" and "conservatives," began to be clear and we have the genesis of the historically Mexican distinctions between the two tendencies.

Even though for a brief period, after 1824 and until 1833, Church-State relations were relatively good, difficult days set in after the latter date. This is neither the place nor the time to

elaborate on the role of the Masonic lodges and the unhappy intervention of the American Minister, Joel Poinsett, in muddying the already unclear Mexican political waters. From the relatively mild anti-clerical, Gómez Farías, on, the breakdown of relations has been fairly steady. The so-called reform of 1833 set things in motion. Attacks on temporalities and on education were in the forefront of the crusade against the prestige of the Church. In 1834 reaction against the extreme measures of the liberals produced a curtailment of the process of reducing the Church. Until 1846 relative tranquillity was enjoyed. In 1847 the State resumed the onslaught. Ecclesiastical properties proved the coveted goods in this case. Between that date and 1854 things looked up considerably for the much harrassed Church. But in the spring of 1854 was formulated the Plan de Ayutla which liquidated the long regime of Santa Anna and ushered in the most ruthless, flamboyant and unhampered persecution of the Church Mexico was to know in the nineteenth century.

A new era of tension began. New names appeared: Benito Juárez, Melchor Campo, Lerdo de Tejada, etc. The *Ley Juárez* set off some veritable fireworks. The *Ley Lerdo* completed the process of rigorous restrictions on ecclesiastical property holding. On top of this came the crowning feature of the assault on the Church, the Constitution of 1857. Education, property holding, release from religious vows: the Constitution ran the gamut of almost everything that could concern the Church. The Three Year War, *Guerra de la reforma,* was touched off by these events. Mexico was torn by revolution around the problem of the Church. The reform laws were promulgated which went much further than anything that had been done heretofore. On top of these misfortunes came the French intervention. Let it be said that enough paper and ink have probably been wasted on the problem of the French invasion, the reign of Maximilian and the allegation that the whole business was merely an intrigue carried out by the clergy to restore their traditional position. It is perhaps high time that the unhappy episode in Mexican history cease to be treated as clerical intrigue against simon pure democracy represented by the liberal forces under Juárez. We live in an age in which anyone who calls himself a liberal is assumed to represent the cause of honesty and decency. Anyone who casts reflections on either motive or procedure of the so-called liberal forces labels himself a reactionary and a hopeless retrograde, if not worse. Let it be recalled that if the conservatives welcomed French aid and suffered intervention to preserve what they considered the essen-

tial elements of Mexican society, the liberals were no less willing to accept the aid and support of the United States. This is said not with any intention of justifying one because of the other: it is merely that we should recognize in this long and tragic struggle that the forces were not divided by clear cut issues in which everyone on one side was a saint and everyone on the other an unmitigated brigand. Juárez was no less an interventionist than those against whom he was fighting; provided the intervention was on his side.

The restrictions and laws of the reform continued to hold after the French left and Maximilian was shot at Querétara. After 1874, the separation of Church and State, absolute and complete, was a reality. The long Díaz regime did not change the juridical basis of the reform. It merely allowed many of its provisions to become a dead letter. His policy was one of conciliation, and during the long dictatorship ecclesiastical limitations were held in abeyance. It is hardly necessary to describe in great detail, the events since 1910. During the epoch of the Mexican revolution we have a repetition of the phenomenon to which reference has just been made, the oscillating nature of the religious controversy. There is no settlement, no solution, no definite respite; there is merely a series of truces followed by a recrudescence of the problem. It is an interminable series of outbreaks and subsiding intervals during which there is a lull but no peace. This has been the case, as has been described, for the entire nineteenth century. It was no less the case after the Revolution got under way.

Let us summarize in a few words the rush of events after the collapse of the ephemeral Madero regime. In 1913, the Revolution was under the guidance and impetus of Venustiano Carranza. Here we have Mexican revolutionary expression against the Church at its most typical. The pronouncements of Carranza and his following might be taken as a pattern, a sort of rough draft of the tirades and diatribes that were to be employed regularly after that. The type of rhetoric which was used against the Church was given form at this time. The phrases, epithets and vitriolic language which were to become almost trite in repetition began to develop during the years in which the Constitutionalist regime held power. The old Reform Laws plus a great many new decrees were put into force. The Church went through one of its bitterest periods between 1913 and 1917, with terrorism and violence as the weapons. The Constitution of 1917 completed the architecture of the Revolution. Famous among the articles of this Constitution, and in this it is an extension of the same provi-

sion in the 1857 document, is Article Three which states baldly that education shall be laical and that no religious body can establish or direct schools of primary grade. The entire language of the article was obviously aimed at making it impossible for members of the religious orders or the secular clergy to impart instruction. From this Constitution dates the rigid restriction of acts of worship to the churches, although many of these external manifestations of faith had long been regulated during the century before. Article 27 incorporated many details regarding church property and made all such the property of the nation. Charitable activities were restricted and the Church was reduced strictly to the administration of the sacraments. Article 130 includes a number of further provisions regarding the restriction of the number of clergy, the authority of the states and the strict limitations on the clergy in political life. The same article declares that "the law recognizes no juridical personality in the religious institutions known as churches," and that "no ministers of religious creeds shall, either in public or private meetings, or in acts of worship or religious propaganda, criticise the fundamental laws of the country, the authorities in particular or the Government in general."

For the next eight years the anti-clerical aspects of the new constitution were not rigidly enforced. No serious attempt was made to do what had obviously been the intention of the drafters of the document at Querétaro: to make the Church as near nonexistent as was possible without actually stating that the Catholic Church was to be exiled from Mexico. Under President Obregón, the situation was latently tense, although open conflict did not ensue except in a number of the states where zealous local governments proceeded to exercise the powers granted them under Article 130 to restrict the number of priests in each jurisdiction. This favorite method was seen as the most effective way of ending the menace of clerical influence: no priests, hence no parishes; and the whole mechanism of ecclesiasticism folds up.

On February 11, 1926, the new regime of Plutarco Elías Calles made it plain that the laws regarding the Church would be enforced. Internal political reasons, as indicated in the pamphlet, *An Introduction to Mexico,*[2] explain the dire calamities which

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2 The ostensible cause for the initiation of the 1926 persecution was a statement by Archbishop Mora y del Río, Archbishop of Mexico City, given on request to a Mexican newspaperman, to the effect that the Mexican hierarchy was in favor of trying to change the persecuting clauses of the Constitution. It was not an announcement of an immediate campaign to amend the Constitution. "From the social-economic point of view, which the revolution proclaimed was its sole purpose, the persecution

descended on the heads of the Mexican hierarchy and people. The government made the customary accusation of sedition, treason and unwillingness to support the state. Archbishop Móra y del Río's statements regarding the incompatibility of the constitutional articles with the liberty of the Church produced an instant reaction. The episcopacy formulated its protest. The controversy was out in the open. The Mexican government seemed amazed that the hierarchy and faithful should be hostile to the anti-religious provisions of the Constitution. In the eyes of the state, which was to be considered supreme, this was the rankest disloyalty. It should be noted that the Mexico of 1926 was dominated totally by the spirit of secularism and statism which have since become so potent elsewhere in the world. The concept of the state supreme and unlimited had taken profound hold of the Mexican leaders. This essentially nineteenth century idea, so utterly incompatible with the whole criterion of Catholic teaching, explains the extreme sensitivity of the Mexican government on this and other occasions to anything that savored of independence of the government. That is to say, independent action was interpreted as antagonism to the state. All within the state and nothing outside the state might well be taken as the axiom of this period. 1926 to 1929 is the apex of the long, hard history of strife. The Church was attacked with a viciousness and enmity which made the acts of Juárez seem positively favorable in comparison.

Foreign priests were expelled, bishops forced out of the country, and a wave of indignation was aroused abroad by the methods employed. During the summer of 1926, religious services were suspended and the Catholic people of Mexico found that the entire clergy had been withdrawn from the churches. The hierarchy held to the position that religious liberty was at stake. The Calles

had no valid reason. The Church was on the side of the main economic aims of the revolution, if not all its methods.

"Politically the 1926 persecution seems to have been a jockeying by the Obregón and Agrarista factions in the Calles government for importance in administering the revolutionary laws in order to retain power and pave the way to a second election of Obregón. Of two factions one was 'Agrarian' and for Obregón and the other was a labor faction. The labor faction was growing. It was organizing both city labor and farm labor. In the agrarian field its organizations were leading in a more regularized, less violent and more permanent development of the land policy against the older chaotic and unorganized 'agrarian' seizure or petitioning. Its power in the city labor field was almost supreme. The cabinet officers administering the land, labor, oil mining and foreign-ownership clauses of the Constitution were of the labor faction. This was the whole social part of the revolution. There was nothing left for the other group to deal with except the Church clause. They seized upon it. Within the Calles cabinet it was the Agrarista faction which administered the persecution." *An Introduction to Mexico*, Catholic Association for International Peace, Washington, pp. 33-34.

government insisted that religious liberty was not involved at all but merely an act of rebellion. There seemed to be no reconciliation between these two diametrically opposed positions.

Attempts were made to bring about a solution. In June of 1929 a *modus vivendi* was reached which brought a temporary halt to the situation of open warfare. There was a recognition of the right of the hierarchy to designate the priests and religious who were to register, as provided by law. This was an indirect way of admitting the existence of a degree, at least, of juridical personality to the Church. There was a tacit understanding that the violent campaign of the state would at least be mitigated. This was no formal agreement but merely the promise given by President Portes Gil. The fragile character of the understanding is evident. As a release from the total suspension of religious life, it was of extreme importance, and it seemed at the time the most that could be obtained under the circumstances. But the religious question was not settled. Late in 1931, it broke out anew. In June of that year the state of Vera Cruz put into effect a law restricting the number of Catholic priests to one for each 100,000 inhabitants. Vera Cruz has long been one of the hotbeds of anti-clericalism. Perhaps no state of the Republic has been more profoundly affected with the virus. Catholic life has been all but non-existent in that coastal region which shares with Tabasco and Chiapas the dubious honor of being the states where the Catholic faith has come near to actual extinction. In Tabasco, no priests at all were allowed and the way was made ready for the regime of Garrido Canabal, whose atheism and vitriolic anti-Catholicism made him notorious throughout Mexico. By December, of 1931, anti-religious activity was in full swing once more. Legislation was quickly enacted to restrict the number of clergy. The priests in Mexico City were reduced from 90 to 24. Chiapas was to have four priests. In Guanajuanto, one priest was to serve each 9,000 faithful. In October of 1932, Archbishop Ruíz y Flores was deported.

While the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas saw a continuation of the general anti-clerical position, in reality, more and more practical liberties were granted not as part of any revamping of the juridical machinery but as a matter of actual practice. By 1936, the churches of Mexico City were filled once more. Even though the number of priests was supposed to be small, the number of Masses was always great. In most of the churches of the capital and the larger provincial cities, throngs attended every religious exercise. In 1937, a violent incident occurred in the

state of Vera Cruz in which police shot a young woman attending Mass in a private house. Cárdenas himself was responsible for bringing about the opening of the churches in that State.

In 1936, the Mexican hierarchy had issued a joint pastoral in which the position of the Church on social matters was reiterated in the clearest terms. It told of the early programs of the Catholic Congresses and other organizations during the Díaz period. Salient points concerned the just wage, the dignity of labor, the deep concern of the Church for the material welfare of man, the right of labor to organize and Christian democracy.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Discuss persecution and the Church-State controversy in Mexico with regard to nineteenth century liberalism and Indian agricultural culture.
2. Compare the attaining of independence in other Latin American countries with the independence movements in Mexico of 1810 and 1821.
3. Discuss Iturbide's three point plan. Why did he fail?
4. Name some elements which contributed to the breakdown of Church-State relations, 1833-1854.
5. Discuss the following in relation to the persecution:
   Benito Juárez; Constitution of 1857; *Guerra de la reforma*; the French invasion and the the reign of Maximilian.
6. What were the relation of the following to Church-State relations:
   The Díaz regime; the revolution under Carranza; the Constitution of 1917; the Calles Regime; the *Modus Vivendi* of 1929; the restriction of the number of priests in 1931; the presidency of Cárdenas?
7. What was the general content of the 1936 Joint Pastoral of the Mexican Hierarchy?

Suggested Readings

Men of Mexico, James M. Magner. Bruce, Milwaukee. 1942. Chapters IX-XVII, on Hidalgo; Morelos; Iturbide; Santa Anna; Juárez; Maximilian; Díaz; Carranza; Calles; Cárdenas.

Blood-Drenched Altars, F. C. Kelley. Bruce, Milwaukee. 1935.

Pastoral Letter on Mexico by the American Hierarchy. The Paulist Press, New York. 1926.

The Church and Mexico, Encyclical of Pope Pius XI. National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington. 1932.

II. THE PRESENT STATUS AND THE ATMOSPHERE OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

The religious struggle has subsided since 1937-38. The end of the Cárdenas regime saw a distinct slackening of the restrictive measures. The political campaign of 1940 involved to some extent a religious problem in that many Catholics saw in General Juan Andreu Almazán a guarantee of more decent treatment. As was generally foreseen, General Manuel Avila Camacho was elected and took office in that year. One of the most remarkable declarations of the new president upon assuming power was to announce himself as a "creyente." No Mexican president had gone that far for a century.

No one with any knowledge of the intricacies of Mexican political life and the singular features of its official organization can contend that even in the highest position, with some exceptions of course, is the sentiment honestly and profoundly anti-Catholic. The deceptive characteristic of Mexico is precisely the fact that anti-clericalism gives the impression of a deeprooted and dogmatic hatred of the Church. Nothing could be further from the truth. Their anti-clericalism is rather secularism—the desire to prevent religion from having an influence on the public and social life of the country. Priest haters of the first order are among the most precipitate to seek the sacraments upon their deathbed. It is told of one high official of the Cárdenas cabinet that he invariably lifted his hat before a church. Upon being asked about this curious bit of conduct in view of his intense anti-clericalism, he blandly replied that "one always raises one's hat before a church."

It must always be kept in mind that the Church in Mexico represents in plain truth the real social force in the country. Other elements of cohesion and national unity are lacking since uniformity of language does not exist and a keen sense of citizenship and of participation in the political life of the nation is absent. The Mexican government and state has been something of a superstructure erected on the great mass of people without the existence of that indispensable common sentiment which must function in order to make a government "legitimate" in the full sense of the word. There exists nothing comparable to the prestige and

position of the British crown in England; nothing that remotely compares with the deeprooted tradition and profoundly popular character of the ancient French monarchy; nothing that presents itself as analogous to the municipal, democratic system of medieval Spain. The Mexican state has had therefore a tragic and pathetic past. The Catholic Church has possessed such overwhelming power, such intense popular support and such blind devotion, that one distinguished Mexican priest has said ironically that the state was the persecuted rather than the Church and the state was the agency about which one should be most concerned. There is much truth in the assertion. At the height of the persecution, Catholic schools were functioning all over Mexico, more or less surreptitiously. It was not unreasonable for a high official of the Mexican government to ask plaintively, when urged to do something about abolishing the restrictive Article III of the Constitution, "If under violent persecution, the Church manages to maintain schools with the support and approval of the people, what will happen if the lid is taken off?" There is more than a half truth in this comment.

Mexican Catholic opinion is sharply divided over the technique of combat and defense. It may be said that there are, broadly speaking, two schools of thought on the question. There are those who fought the state tooth and nail in the past and to whom the Mexican Revolution, and everything it stands for and has accomplished, is anathema. It is this group which would prefer a state of conflict, which would brook no truce and wishes no compromise on even minor points. It is this element which was responsible for the fatal Cristero movement which got so completely out of hand that only a direct and categorical statement from the Holy See could stop it. There is still much of the Cristero mentality among Mexican Catholics. They fail to realize that the Church as such has no business carrying on armed rebellion. They do not comprehend that to rise up in arms as *Catholics* first, and Mexicans afterwards, does unlimited harm to the very cause they propose to defend.[3] They do not compre-

[3] In this connection Pius XI in his Apostolic Letter on the Religious Situation in Mexico, issued in March 1937, told the Bishops of Mexico that they had often recalled to their people how the Church promotes peace and order and condemns every violent, unjust insurrection against the established authority, but that they had affirmed, also, that where a constituted authority had so acted against truth and justice as to destroy the foundations of authority then it is impossible to see how citizens could be condemned for uniting to defend, with licit and fit means, the nation and themselves against those who would use governmental authority to bring it to its ruin. He went on to say that while the practical solution depends on circumstances, nevertheless the clergy and "Catholic Action" (the organization of the laity working with and under

hend that to set religion off so absolutely against loyalty to the state is a fatal blunder which can easily produce irreparable consequences. They do not appreciate, what the Sein Feiners in Ireland saw, that to carry on the fight as Catholics is infinitely less productive of results than to carry it on as Irishmen. If the Cristeros had said in their day that instead of fighting as Catholics, they were fighting as Mexicans, intent on getting Calles out of power, their position would have been materially stronger. That is, of course, water now over the dam. It is worth while, however, to recollect this unfortunate episode in Mexican history which reveals a state of mind which has contributed to the muddying of the waters and to a postponement of the most salutary solution of the problem. There are those who still think in those terms, who would wish to wage battle with the government to the bitter end, even when that government is benevolent and makes no effort to enforce a hostile legislation. It is the old guard of die-hards, unwilling to make reasonable compromises even when the realities of the moment are overwhelmingly potent.

Fortunately there has risen up in the ranks of Catholic laity and clergy a new element which is much more conscious of the times and the conditions. This group does not assume, in Bourbon fashion, that the Revolution of 1910 was merely a nightmare and can be wished out of existence. It takes the Revolution for what it is, with the good and the bad; with the virtues and the evils, with the civic accomplishment and the banditry. It does not decry the past; it does not think that a return to the days of Don Porfirio would settle anything. It knows that the Revolution is a tremendous fact which must be taken into account, and that over thirty years of experimentation have not left Mexico as it was. It does not deny that there are merits in some of the things that the Revolution has carried out. It is not, in a word, fixed in

the Bishops) could not engage in a violent defense of rights or even take part in the material and technical problems connected with civic and political rights; and that demands for restoration of these rights, being in the realm of means, must not use intrinsically evil means, must he proportionate to the end in view, be employed only to the degree required and in such a way as not to cause the community greater harm than the wrong struck at. He specified as a task of hoth the clergy and of "Catholic Action" the preparation of Catholics to make just use of their rights and to defend them with all legitimate means according as the common good requires. Both the clergy and "Catholic Action," he said, must contrihute to the prosperity of the nation, especially encouraging the union of the citizens and of the social classes and collahorating in all those social initiatives which are not opposed to dogma or the laws of Christian morals.

The effect of this Pastoral Letter was to show that the Church and Catholic lay organizations working under the Church were not leading a revolution and that while an armed uprising may he at times necessary it has its own laws of right and wrong which must be followed even in the circumstances of persecution.

an attitude of blind partisanship, bent on perpetuating a state of friction and warfare, which can only redound to the disadvantage of the Church. It accepts the suggestions of the Holy See on seeking to work out relations with the state and refuses to sanction open, avowed and unabated hostility.

Although the state of affairs in Mexico today is tranquil, it would be rash to predict that all is well for the future. There are too many imponderables in the situation. Politically the country is far from normal. With the presidential elections still many months in the future, agitation has already begun and what is euphemistically called "futurism" in Mexican politics is well under way. The Mexican army is a force of incalculable possibilities. It is no longer the bedraggled entity which the popular imagination was led to believe distinguished the armed forces of the Republic. Thanks to Lend-Lease, it is a modernized, mechanized institution under the personal direction and influence of Lázaro Cárdenas. To what extent the ex-President is bent on retaining real control of both government and army is a matter about which there is much speculation. The fact is that armed revolution in Mexico as of yore is out of the question. The army is today a force against which no uprising could possibly make any headway. The Party of the Mexican Revolution has undoubtedly suffered some setbacks. The one-party system with the designation of candidates who are as inevitably elected as Democrats in Mississippi, has produced resentment, irritation and antagonism. It does not set right to have one party monopolize every public office with no chance for the opposition. Nevertheless the Party has suffered in recent months severe internal friction. The Confederation of Mexican Workers is in a like situation. The power formerly wielded by Vicente Lombardo Toledano has unquestionably diminished. Dozens of affiliated unions have broken away from the once all-powerful C. T. M. Lombardo Toledano himself, in spite of his presidency of the so-called Confederation of Latin American Workers and his constant junketing all over the hemisphere, is no longer the influence that he was in the past. At the International Labor Organization conference in Philadelphia in May, 1944, he was thoroughly repudiated in his assertions by the Mexican Minister of Labor and failed in his proposal to oust the Argentine delegates. His voice is still stentorian and is raised on every and all occasions.

It would be difficult to attempt to evaluate other influences which are at work in present-day Mexico. The establishment of the Embassy of the Soviet Union under the direction of able and

affable Constantine Oumansky is an influence to be reckoned with. That the Russian Embassy is exerting this influence and is a source of pressure in Mexican affairs admits of no doubt. To what extent this will develop, no one can say. It is an element which is worthy of the closest attention. The future of Mexican-United States relations is always a factor in Mexico. The close collaboration at the present time may or may not be a good index for the future. The proposed industrialization of Mexico with large American investments would create a still closer contact. It is clear that not for many years have the relations of the governments been as externally cordial and harmonious as at the present time. The Mexican government is undoubtedly entirely in accord with the broad lines of inter-American policy and is aiding the war effort in every possible way, even to internal sacrifices. Mexico has experienced direct effects of its aid to the United Nations. Thousands of its peasants have gone to the United States as "braceros," with the result that states such as Jalisco have suffered enormously in agricultural production. Food products, mineral resources and the like have been poured out to aid the common cause. The Mexican government has not been reluctant to suffer a tremendous inflation and a constant rise in the cost of living as the penalty it must pay for participation in the war against the Axis.

On the strictly religious side, it may be said that there are isolated instances and elusive episodes which may be symptomatic of the undercurrents. The anti-religious sentiment is ever latent, as is manifested by the precipitate manner in which the Mexican congress seizes on anything that may serve to reaffirm its anti-clerical position. One of the most significant of the recent measures was that taken by the Mexican government last November in prohibiting members of the armed forces of the Republic to attend any religious ceremony in uniform. Catholic opinion was considerably aroused because of the extraordinary statement that aside from the fact that Mexico was a non-sectarian state, "the rites of the various religious faiths are out of harmony with the dignity of the uniform and are contrary to the martial spirit inherent in the armed forces." Catholic spokesmen were quick to seize on this phrase to point out that even in the Soviet Union, where respect for religion could hardly be said to be too evident, no proscription of this kind existed, and it was well known from numerous Moscow correspondents that members of the Red Army frequently attended religious ceremonies in uniform. The distinguished Mexican writer, Alfonso Junco, published a magnifi-

cent article in *Novedades* entitled, *La dignidad militar y la dignidad de México.* He does not fail to point out that this new regulation, which is not merely the application of an old one, but an entirely new thing, is in complete contradiction with the practice of the United States and Great Britain where the fullest encouragement is given to all members of the army and navy to practice the religion of their preference.

The professional Mexican revolutionaries, especially those in positions of responsibility, are notoriously thin-skinned when it comes to any criticism of present Mexico, its institutions or its social philosophy. Fortunately the verbal and rhetorical whirlwinds which such criticisms produce are of short duration. The press may be full of them one day and the next the matter has been entirely forgotten, to give way to a more enticing incident.

Another source of periodic concern is the tactics of the Communist Party in penetrating government ministries with its influence. This is particularly true of the Ministry of Public Instruction. Every few weeks the Mexican press calls attention to the prevalence of "agitation" in the Ministry of Education and the number of Communists who hold office in that branch. Not a few editorials have appeared since last November regarding the danger to the public school system of the constant upheavals provoked by the efforts of the Communists to make headway in that direction. The press publishes from time to time the harangues and addresses of the revolutionary leaders, particularly Lombardo Toledano. Under date of November 21, 1943, the president of the C. T. M. unburdened himself before a large gathering on the attitude of the Revolution toward Catholics and toward the Church. Lombardo has long insisted in his speeches on a subtle differentiation between Catholics and the Catholic Church, between the clergy and the faithful. This loquacious leader reiterated the age-old accusations of clerical meddling in politics, Church domination of the national life and, above all, the intention of the Catholic Church in Mexico to provoke civil conflict for the purpose of overturning the legitimate government. He concluded with a moving appeal to his Catholic comrades to lend no ear to these machinations and to accept the truth that the Revolution favored freedom of conscience and of religion. This instance is cited merely to indicate that, with a remarkable periodicity, the religious question is dragged out and violent words are hurled at the clergy and hierarchy, even though it must be common knowledge that the Church would be the last agency to provoke civil strife. The attempt in April, 1944, on the life of

President Avila Camacho gave rise to certain strictures on the Church. Unhappily the army officer, guilty of the attack, was a Catholic. No proof has been adduced to show that his act was other than that of one who was mentally unbalanced. The lurid photographs, subsequently plastered all over Mexico City, of army men in uniform receiving Communion were shown to have been taken long before the promulgation of the decree referred to above, and those who were submitted to interrogation, in order to clarify possible implication in the attack, were all released as completely innocent. The incident served, nevertheless, as so many others, to arouse some sentiment and to be made the pretext for the usual aspersions cast on the clergy and Catholic laity.

However, it may be said that the Church in Mexico City finds itself in a better position than for many years. Respect for its activities is almost complete. The President has avowedly set himself the task of working along lines of harmony and fraternity. His appeals to national unity and understanding brand him as a Mexican leader fully conscious of the need for peace and repose. Years of agitation, tumult and friction have left the Mexican people with nerves on edge. The calm, intelligent and moderate regime of Manuel Avila Camacho has done wonders to increase serenity in a nation long convulsed by the passions of sectarian hatred and fratricidal conflict.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What is the character of Mexican anti-clericalism?
2. Why is the Church in Mexico the one real social force in the country?
3. Discuss the two theories of combat and defense on which Mexican Catholic opinion is divided, in connection with the doctrine enunciated by Pius XI in 1937.
4. What is the present status of Mexican politics with regard to:
   (a) the army? (b) the Party of the Mexican Revolution? (c) the Confederation of Mexican Workers?
5. Other influences of present-day Mexico:
   (a) the Soviet Embassy; (b) Mexican-U. S. relations; (c) Mexican participation in the war.
6. What is the present situation of the Church in Mexico?

Suggested Readings

"The Church as a Vital Factor in the Life of Latin America." *America,* March 25, 1944.
Encyclical *The Religious Situation in Mexico,* Pius XI. N. C. W. C., Washington, 1937.
"Mexico's Economy Falters Under War's Strain," Richard Pattee. *America,* May 27, 1944.
"Russia and Latin America," Richard Pattee. *America,* May 13, 1944.
"Mexican Compromise," Camille M. Cianfarro. *The Sign,* August, 1944.

III. THE INTELLECTUAL REVIVAL

It would be impossible, in this brief space, to summarize the revival of Catholic educational institutions throughout the republic. As has been indicated, according to the letter of the law, no religious communities may teach and technically no Catholic educational institutions have any business existing at all. Even at the time of the Calles persecution, schools continued. Although their existence was precarious and their work interrupted, they managed to carry on the task of imparting religious instruction. True enough, this had to be done and still has to be done somewhat *sub rosa*. Catholic schools, as all private schools, must conform to the program laid down by the Ministry of Education. The schedule and program do not make allowance for such matters as Christian doctrine. Consequently Catholic schools must incorporate this subject at odd hours and under special conditions in order to comply with the regulations. At the present time, the inspection to which such schools are submitted does not go to the extremes of ten or fifteen years ago. Formerly the presence of any religious objects would have been tantamount to closure. Today, respect is still maintained for the appearances. No members of religious orders wear the habit. The crucifix is not displayed on the wall. Catholic books of devotion are not left about conspicuously, and, in general, efforts are made to avoid antagonizing the sensibilities of those who would welcome the opportunity of clamping down on these centers. Catholic schools have sprung up like mushrooms. Many religious orders have flourishing establishments which draw hundreds of pupils.

Mexican seminaries have slowly come back into existence. The building of the principal Archdiocesan seminary was long ago confiscated and the center was then removed to another town, where it now functions. Most of the dioceses now have their own seminary, although many, because of their remoteness, lack of vocations and monetary embarrassments, prefer to send their candidates to a central seminary or to Montezuma Seminary in New Mexico. Several have seminaries merely for the work in philosophy.

The National University of Mexico has never been a Catholic center since the days of the colony. When it was reorganized in 1910, under the inspiration of Justo Sierra, it was distinctly non-

Catholic. It was probably the last bulwark of positivism in the Republic, and even today there are still traces of this doctrine, which exercised a remarkable influence on Mexican thought. The University is literally completely free in its recognition of the right of the professors to teach whatever doctrine may appeal to them. In 1933, the question reached a critical stage when the University students and many of its professors opposed tenaciously the application to the University of the pernicious idea that the instruction must conform to Socialist dogmas. It was at that time that Antonio Caso, Rodulfo Brito Fousher, the present rector, and Manuel Gómez Morín were primarily responsible for the expulsion of Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the University was saved from the ignominy of succumbing to the official precept of Marxist education. The institution was made autonomous and given a grant which was intended to be so small as to bring about its collapse. Under the rectorship of Gómez Morín, the University managed to weather the severe storm of the first year and has functioned ever since, although crippled by economic restrictions. Catholic influence in the University is considerable. A large number of its faculty members are active Catholics. In fields as important as philosophy, political science and the like, there is a fair representation of Catholic teaching. Thomistic thought holds an established and honorable place in the curriculum. Catholic influence in this institution is incidental, however, and it certainly cannot be called a Catholic atmosphere in the strict sense of the word.

Catholic intellectual revival is to be found elsewhere; in the reviews, journals, in the appearance of an increasing number of Catholic writers, and in the remarkable continuation of the humanistic tradition which is deeprooted in Mexican culture. In an excellent article published in *The Catholic World* of January, 1941, Father James A. Magner of the Catholic University, deals briefly with the names and activities of a number of the priests and laymen who have contributed most effectively to this revival, especially in the field of letters. The present comment seeks merely to outline the general trend and the outstanding names.

The influence of the Church, needless to say, has been decisive in every period of Mexican cultural history, from the time of the conquest to the present. It is no exaggeration to say that, except possibly for a very short interval during the middle of the last century, Catholic writers, researchers and humanists have occupied the forefront of Mexican cultural life, and this is especially true during the epoch since 1910. The tragedy of the past twenty-five years has been that since the clergy was rigidly excluded from

all official participation in any aspect of the intellectual or artistic life of the country, the impression was created that strictly Catholic contributions were entirely lacking. This has fortunately changed. Today, priests are beginning to play an increasing role in cultural affairs, not infrequently in connection with official activities.

A superficial résumé of the place of the Church in the culture of Mexico must begin with the fact that the preservation of the documents and the sources for knowledge of the pre-Columbian culture of Mexico is entirely the work of the Church. Fray Bernardino de Sahagún and other missionaries collected and preserved the Aztec poems, and the most distinguished translator of this ancient literature is a priest, Father Angel María Garibay. The great source of Mayan thought, the *Popol-Vuh* was discovered by Fray Francisco de Ximénez in the seventeenth century, and the *Chilam-Balam,* by Bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona in the nineteenth century. The earliest schools in New Spain were, of course, entirely under religious auspices. Primary schools and centers for training in arts and crafts were founded, especially through the influence of the great Franciscan, Pedro de Gante. The first school on a higher level for Indians was the famous College of Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco, founded by Fray Juan de Zumárraga and the Franciscans. In the establishment of the University, Fray Juan de Zumárraga was aided by the Viceroy Mendoza. Among the earliest and most distinguished of its professors were Fray Alonso de la Veracruz, one of the great intellectual figures of colonial Mexico, to whom a monument has just been raised in the patio of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the National University, an interesting testimony in contemporary Mexico of the esteem in which this Augustinian friar is held. Zumárraga was responsible for the printing press; and of the 200 books published in Mexico in the sixteenth century, the vast majority were of a religious character. Most of these were destined for the education of the Indians. The first publications in America in the field of Philosophy, Theology and Physics are the works of Alonso de la Veracruz. The investigation of the aboriginal languages and the creation of the discipline of philology in the New World was the work of Fray Andrés de Olmos, Fray Alonso de Molina, Fray Maturino Gilberti and others. The history of Mexico would be utterly unavailable but for the great contributions of Sahagún, Motolinia, Las Casas, Mendieta, Durán, Torquemada and others—all of them religious.

The first strictly literary work in prose published in Mexico

was that of a priest, Francisco Cervantes de Salazar. The first dramatist born in Mexico was another priest, Juan Pérez Ramírez. The entire production for the theater in the sixteenth century was exclusively that of priests.

The three greatest names in literature in the seventeenth century were profoundly Catholic: one a Bishop, Bernardo de Balbuena; another a nun, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, and the third a layman of singular devotion, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón. The most learned figure in the field of science in this century in Mexico was a priest, Carlos de Siguenza y Góngora. The founder of the first newspaper in Mexico was another cleric, José María Casterona y Ursúa. One of the most notable of the poets influenced by Góngora was the Jesuit, Matías de Bocanegra.

In the eighteenth century the situation is identical. Three priests were among the most distinguished poets of the time: Cayetano de Cabrera y Quintero, J. Manuel Sartorio and Fray Manuel Navarrete. The great humanists of this age were the Jesuits, who, after the expulsion in 1767 were forced into exile in Europe. Alegre, Clavigero, Cavo, Abad, Landívar and others are names which shed great luster on the Mexico of the time and whose culture was lost to the New World after the decree forcing the Society of Jesus out of the Spanish dominions. Another name to be reckoned with in this last century before independence is that of the scientist José Antonio Alzate, a man of humble condition but of enormous importance in fomenting the development of the exact sciences in New Spain. One of the most important of the scientific societies of modern Mexico bears his name, although it is rarely mentioned that he, too, was a priest.

With the coming of independence, the number of members of the clergy engaged in intellectual and literary activities does not diminish. One of the leading poets of the period of independence is Father Anastasio de Ochoa. The most outstanding prose writers are also priests: Francisco Severo Maldonado, José María Cos, Fray Severando Teresa de Mier and others. The first Mexican novelist, José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, was profoundly Catholic. The classical poets of the mid-century were largely laymen of solid Catholic background. Ignacio Ramírez was the most notable exception. The historians of the past century, of which Mexico has produced a legion, were almost entirely Catholic: Bustamante, Alamán, Luis Cuevas Orozco y Berra, García Icazbalceta, Nicolás León, Pereyra, etc. It would be impossible to omit in this extremely summary sketch of the influence of the Church in the culture of Mexico, reference to the place of two

bishops in the humanistic culture of the second half of the last century: Ignacio Montes de Oca, Bishop of San Luis Potosí, and Joaquín Arcadio Pegaza of Vera Cruz.

Of the modernist poets, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Manuel José Othón were Catholics. Amado Nervo was a Catholic in his youth, lost the faith, but fortunately returned to die within the Church.

The present century is one in which all forms of Catholic expression have been seriously hampered by the persecution and the general elimination of religious influences from the official institutions. In Mexico, as in all Latin American countries, cultural life flourishes with difficulty if not supported by the state. Since the national budget is inevitably the principal industry of the country, most forms of culture tend to languish if not the recipients of periodic injections in the form of state aid. Catholic culture in Mexico has been cut off from such assistance. The astonishing thing is that it has been so vigorous and effective. In the field of history, two bishops wrote works of enduring value: Francisco Plancarte Navarrete with his *Prehistoria de México* and Francisco Banegas Galván, whose three volume *Historia de México* is indispensable. Three outstanding contemporary historians, all priests, may be mentioned: Mariano Cuevas, S.J., José Bravo Ugarte, S.J., and Father Jesús García Gutiérrez. Father Cuevas is widely known for his monumental *Historia de la Iglesia en México* and his later *Historia de la Nación Mexicana.* Father Bravo Ugarte has published two volumes of the four which are to treat of the historical evolution of Mexico since pre-Cortesian times and which bid fair to constitute one of the most remarkable historical contributions of the present day in the Republic. Father García Gutiérrez has done much in the examination of the problems created by the *Patronato Real* (Royal Patronage) in Mexico and the peculiarities of the relations of Church and State which have grown out of this arrangement.

The history of philosophy in Mexico owes everything to the solid work done by the Bishop of León, Emeterio Valverde Téllez. The most famous of contemporary Mexican thinkers, José Vasconcelos, former Minister of Public Instruction, former candidate for the presidency and stormy petrel of Mexican politics for many years, was converted to Catholicism two years ago after a long and tempestuous career in the field of ideas far removed from the Church. Thomist thought is represented in contemporary Mexico by several important figures: Oswaldo Robles, Jesús Guisa y Acevedo and Antonio Gómez Robledo—all laymen. Within the

last four or five years a young Jesuit, José Sánchez Villaseñor, has won considerable prestige through the publication of two books, *El sistema filosófico de Vasconcelos* (1929) and *José Ortega y Gasset, Pensamiento y trayectoria* (1943). Both works reveal a critical capacity of the first order.

Although Catholic writers have been less distinguished in the field of the novel, mention may be made in passing of two contemporary novelists whose work is of positive interest and who are active Catholics, Perfecto Méndez Padilla and Eduardo J. Correa.

On the purely literary side, by far the most fecund and interesting manifestation of Catholic culture is that furnished by the religious poets. Not all of them limit their efforts to this field, but their great contribution to contemporary Mexican culture undoubtedly rests along this line. The mainspring of this movement has been the literary review, *Abside,* founded in 1937 and edited by Father Gabriel Méndez Plancarte. This review, of extremely wide influence, is not concerned solely with poetry, but includes history, criticism and other phases of modern culture, all imbued with a definitely humanistic note.

Alfonso Junco is outstanding among the modern Catholic poets and prose writers of Mexico. His influence is wide and deep and his productivity astonishing in view of his multiple occupations. His work antedates the founding of *Abside.* His outstanding poetical contributions are: *El alma estrella* (1920); *Posesión* (1923); *La divina aventura* (1938). In criticism, history, sociology, etc., he has been amazingly prolific. Among this type of work are: *Fisonomías* (1927); *Cristo* (1931 and 1942); *Motivos mexicanos* (1933); *Savia* (1939); *Un siglo de México* (1934); and *Egregios* (1944). Alfonso Junco is one of the most original, vigorous and definitely Catholic writers in the Spanish language today.

Gabriel Méndez Plancarte, Doctor in Philosophy and Theology from the Gregorian University in Rome, is one of the younger priests whose place in Mexican culture is assured. He is the editor and founder of *Abside.* In addition, he has published three important works in verse: *Primicias* (1927); *Oda secular guadalupana* (1931); *Salmos* (1942). His *Horacio en México,* published by the National University of Mexico in 1937 is an erudite and profound study of the influence of Horace and the Mexican translators of the great Latin poet in Mexican literature. In 1940 he published an anthology of the poems of Joaquín Arcadio Pegaza and a year later a most important volume, *Humanistas del siglo XVIII.* Two other critical works attest to his productivity:

Nueve poemas inéditos del P. Juan Luis Maneiro (1942), and the selection and editing of texts from the writings of Andrés Bello, published in 1943 by the Ministry of Education. The last work of Father Méndez Plancarte is the product of three lectures given at the Palace of Fine Arts in January of 1944, entitled, *Indice del humanismo mexicano* (1944). One of the most suggestive ideas in this excellent treatment of the long and distinguished humanistic tradition of Mexico is the emphasis on the fact that the most authentically democratic ideas in the experience of Mexico are to be found in the work and the thought of three bishops, Julián Garcés, Vasco de Quiroga and Bartolomé de las Casas, and one Jesuit theologian, Francisco Xavier Alegre. The examination of the role of these precursors during the early century sheds abundant light on the attitude of the Church toward the Indian, and the enormous contribution of the clergy and the religious orders to a sane and consistent solution of the problem of harmonizing the indigenous and the Hispanic: the problem that has haunted Mexico with unremitting anguish ever since Cortés first set foot on Mexican soil.

The name of Father Angel María Garibay has been mentioned. He must be included in this short list of the most important Catholic literary men of the present day in Mexico. He is at the present time a Canon at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the outskirts of Mexico City. He has published one volume only of poems, *El poema de los Arboles.* His most outstanding work has been the translation into Spanish of preconquest Aztec poetry: *La Poesía lírica azteca* (1937); *Poesía indígena de la Altaplanicie* (1940); *Llave del Nahuatl* (1940); and *Poesía Indígena precortesiana,* published in *Abside* in 1942. In addition to the important scholarship in the Indian literatures of the country, Father Garibay had devoted considerable attention to the Spanish rendition of the Latin and Greek classics, *Esquilo: Trilogía de Orestes* (1938).

Father Octaviano Valdés belongs definitely to this school of religious poets and humanists. As is the case with so many of the present day Mexican clergy, Father Valdés is a product of the Pío Latino, Seminary for Latin Americans, in Rome. In his *El Pozo de Jacob* and in numerous poems published in *Abside,* he reveals himself as one of the most original and deepest of the contemporary Mexican poets. An excellent critic, he published his *El Prisma de Horacio* in 1937. He also translated in elegant Spanish the great Latin poem of Landívar, *Rusticatio Mexicana,* under the title, *Por los campos de México.*

Father Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, brother of Father Gabriel Méndez, is distinguished primarily as a critic. His principal works are *El grano de mostaza* and *Mañana del poeta* (1938), which is an ample study of Amado Nervo whose earlier verses, still unpublished, were brought together in this volume. He also published a volume entitled *Poetas Novo-hispanos* (1942), an anthology of Mexican poets in the sixteenth century. Father Méndez plans to publish two other similar volumes devoted to the poetry of the following two centuries. Much of his criticism has appeared in *Abside* and in the columns of *El Universal,* to which he is a regular contributor.

José Luis Ojeda, a priest, published one small book of verse under the title, *Claridad.* This was followed by *Agua que corre,* which appeared in 1943. Father Francisco Alday, whose poems have appeared in *Abside* and given evidence of inspiration and ability, has not yet published in book form. Father Manuel Ponce is the youngest of the group. Also a priest, he has been profoundly influenced by the modern Spanish poets: Juan Ramón Jiménez, Frederico García Lorca, Pedro Salinas and others. Two small volumes have come from his pen: *Ciclo de Vírgenes* (1939) and *Quadrageneraio y segunda pasión* (1942).

There is no strictly Catholic press in Mexico. The political and social atmosphere is plainly not conducive to the existence of a Catholic daily, along the lines, let us say of *El Debate,* or the *A.B.C.* in the Madrid of before the Civil War. Catholic writers have found an outlet in the great Mexico City dailies and perhaps this has served to give them an influence which would have been much more restricted if they were limited to the purely Catholic press. It is often forgotten that it is equally important to reach a non-Catholic reading public as it is to repeat to the Catholic public what may be already fairly widely accepted ideas. Mexican Catholic writers and journalists have had this advantage and have found no difficulty in expressing themselves freely on matters close to the Church. The atmosphere at the present time is one of complete freedom of expression and there is no evidence that any restrictions except that of ordinary prudence apply to what may be written on religious subjects.

Among those who contribute weekly to the metropolitan press are Alfonso Junco, already mentioned. For years he was a regular columnist on *El Universal.* Of late he is attached to *Novedades,* one of the most energetic editorial enterprises in Mexico City. Junco is recognized everywhere as a distinctly Catholic writer. On the same newspaper is to be found one of the most

active Mexican thinkers in the social and economic field, Mariano Alcocer, Professor in the National University and voluminous writer on social problems. Every Tuesday his column appears in *Novedades* and his influence now extends to provinces where he contributes regularly to four newspapers. Another Catholic writer, Jesús Guisa y Acevedo, is also attached to *Novedades* and writes openly and frankly as a Catholic journalist. Father Alfonso Méndez Plancarte appears every Monday morning in *El Universal* in articles notable for the purity of style and the subtlety of thought. Father Antonio Brambila has written a weekly column in *El Universal* for many years, touching every conceivable topic. He has not published in book form, although his prose is among the most agile and original in Mexico and his clarity of thought and expression outstanding. An able historian, Eduardo Enrique Ríos, writes a regular column for *Novedades* and avows his Catholicism openly. There are many other Catholics who write for the press. Many do not deal with matters relating to the Church at all or are merely occasional contributors. In this class are to be found such Catholics as Alberto María Carreño, Rafael García Granados, and many others.

These brief notes on the intellectual revival in Mexico would be incomplete without reference to the state of Catholic reviews. This is by no means an exhaustive list. It is merely a number of the best known titles and indicates the relatively wide coverage of the Catholic journals and the variety of their content. One of the most interesting features is the fact that a number of the diocesan seminaries publish their own reviews, edited by the seminarians, which not infrequently are of the highest caliber. Included in this category are: *Duc in Altum* (Seminary of the Archdiocese of Mexico); *Apóstol* (Seminary of Guadalajara); *Trento* (Seminary of Morelia); *Presagio* (Seminary of León); *Palestra* (Seminary of Aguascalientes); *Studium* (Seminary of Colima).

This is by no means complete but gives some idea of this phase of Catholic publications. Many of the dioceses now have their own official bulletin which in some cases is of strictly local interest and in others contains material of more general Catholic concern. The *Gaceta oficial del Arzobispado de México,* the *Boletín Eclesiástico* of Guadalajara and the *Revista Eclesiástico* of Puebla are typical of this group. There are perhaps eight or ten dioceses in the Republic that issue such bulletins.

More general publications, either avowedly Catholic or practically so in the light of their orientation, are: *Abside,* edited by Father Gabriel Méndez Plancarte; *Jus,* primarily interested in

Law and the Social Sciences, (Editor: Lic. Juan Landerreche Obregón); *La Nación,* official organ of Acción Nacional, to which reference will be made under that section; *Orden,* the review of the Synarchist movement which supplements the weekly paper *El Sinarquista.*

More specialized reviews, with emphasis on various fields are: *Estudios Históricos,* edited in Guadalajara by Father Luis Medina Ascensio; *La Voz Guadalupana,* edited officially by the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe; *Christus,* an ecclesiastical review primarily for priests edited by Father José Romero, S.J.; *Vida,* popular review, edited also by Father Romero.

The organization known as *La Buena Prensa* is a most remarkable effort to disseminate widely cheap editions of Catholic pamphlets and booklets. It has issued millions of such publications and publishes regularly several reviews on varying levels, of which the last two mentioned above are examples.

The excellent review, *Divulgación Histórica,* edited by Alberto María Carreño, has unfortunately ceased to appear.

Sacred music has merited in Mexico two important reviews. One is *Schola Cantorum,* edited by Miguel Bernal Jiménez, a layman, in Morelia, which has had a positive influence in creating interest in the production outside of Mexico City in this special field. The National Commission on Sacred Music of which Monsignor Miguel Darío Miranda, Bishop of Tulancingo, is chairman, issues a review, *Cantantibus Organis.*

The more popular field is represented by the *Mensajero del Sagrado Corazón,* and *Rutas,* an interesting Catholic review issued in Monterrey.

The Catholic youth organizations are represented by *Juventud Católica* of the Acción Católica de Juventud Mexicana, and *Juventud,* edited by Guadalupe Gutiérrez Velasco, the organ of the women's branch of the same organization.

The Franciscans have an interesting and well edited review called *Resurgimiento* published under the direction of Father Guillermo Valle in Zapopán, State of Jalisco. It would be impossible, of course, not to mention the organ of Montezuma Seminary in New Mexico, *Montezuma,* which reaches a considerable reading public in Mexico.

During the persecution, Catholic primary and even secondary schools were maintained under the most trying conditions. The real difficulty was in the field of higher education. It is plain that a Catholic university cannot exist in Mexico, at least at the present time. A number of private projects have taken shape which

serve the purpose of providing Catholic instruction on the higher level.

Space does not allow a detailed description of all of them. Note will be made of three, each of which in its own sphere contributes to the formation of a Catholic consciousness among the young men and women of Mexico. One of the oldest establishments is *Cultura Feminina,* founded in 1926 under the immediate direction of a most remarkable Catholic laywoman, Sofía del Valle, and under the general inspiration of the present Bishop Miranda. This institution came into being at the height of the persecution. The trials and tribulations in managing to find accommodations were innumerable. The purpose was to bring together a selected group of Catholic girls who would receive over a period of four years a thorough grounding in Catholic philosophy, apologetics and action. This group was trained to influence others who might come in contact with them in their own localities. It was to provide effective and intelligent leadership among Catholic women, no matter what their ultimate destiny might be. For eighteen years this institution has functioned. Hundreds of young women have gone out and have become a lay apostolate of the greatest importance. "Catholic Action" as such has received the important impetus of this increasing group of trained Catholic workers.

Another institution for women, also in Mexico City, is the *Instituto Familiar y Social de México.* This is a Catholic center on an entirely different level. It seeks in a maximum period of two years to offer practical domestic training to young women and girls who intend to form homes. It does not pretend to "intellectualize" them, nor to make them outstanding Catholic thinkers. It provides all of the phases of domestic sciences and seeks to inculcate in the young woman who may pursue the course both the practical training necessary in the home and the basis of understanding of the Catholic concept of marriage and its responsibilities.

The *Centro Cultural Universitario* was founded a few years ago under the auspices of the Society of Jesus for the purpose of providing young men with instruction at the university level. This has become an increasingly important Catholic center, since it is under its auspices that many of the Catholic student organizations function. It offers a complete program in the fields of history, philosophy and letters and its work is recognized by the National University of Mexico. The Director and leading spirit in this important enterprise is Father Alfonso Castiello, S.J.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. (a) What are the legal restrictions on Catholic schools and the teaching by religions? (b) the actual status of Catholic schools? (c) of Seminaries?
2. What is the atmosphere and influence of the National University of Mexico?
3. What is (a) the general influence of the Church with regard to Mexican cultural history? (b) its work in the preservation of historical documents; in the establishment of schools and universities; introducing the printing press; work on Indian languages; literature; drama.
4. What was the character of the literary and scientific figures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Of the Independence period? The last century?
5. Why has Catholic culture been hampered during the present century?
6. Discuss the work of the following: (a) Historians; (b) Philosophers; (c) Novelists.
7. What is the place of the religious poets in contemporary Catholic culture?
8. Why do Catholic writings appear so frequently in the metropolitan press of Mexico? Who are some of the regular contributors to *Novedades* and *El Universal*?
9. Discuss the character of the seminary reviews; diocesan bulletins; general publications and specialized reviews; popular pamphlets; music; Catholic Action publications, etc.
10. Describe the work of the following in the education of young men and women: (a) Cultura Feminina; (b) Instituto Familiar y Social de Mexico; (c) Centro Cultural Universitario.

Suggested Readings

The Epic of Latin American Literature, Arturo Torres-Ríoseco. Oxford University Press, New York. 1942. Chapter I.

Mexico and the U. S. C. A. I. P. Sections XVI, XVII.

"Literary Contributions of Catholics in Nineteenth Century Mexico," Francis Borgia Steck, O.F.M. *The Americas,* Vol. I, No. 1. Academy of American Franciscan History, Washington.

"The Franciscan Contribution to Mexican Culture," Eduardo Enrique Ríos. *The Americas,* Vol. I, No. 1. Academy of American Franciscan History, Washington.

"The Catholic Literary Revival in Mexico," James A. Magner. *The Catholic World,* Vol. 152, pp. 458-62.

IV. ORGANIZED MOVEMENTS CLAIMING CATHOLIC INSPIRATION

Acción Nacional

The history of organized political parties in opposition to the established government has not been a particularly happy one. During the period of Francisco I. Madero there was a Catholic political party in existence which had a completely ephemeral record. After that date there was no possibility of direct political action as such. Catholic thinking in Mexico on the organization of a Catholic political party is now determined entirely by the attitude of the hierarchy, which is completely opposed to this recourse, and by the specific instructions contained in the communication of His Holiness Pius XI to the hierarchy of Mexico under date of February 2, 1926, entitled, *Paterna Sane Sollicitudo.*[4] In this message the Pope reiterated his instructions that "in the light of the unfavorable conditions prevailing in your country, it is necessary that you, your clergy and the Catholic organizations, remain as far removed as possible from the passions of political factions so that your enemies may not take religion as merely another political party. Therefore, all citizens, as Catholics, should form no political party or faction which bears the name of Catholic; the Bishops and clergy should refrain from identifying themselves with political parties, or writing in newspapers of a distinctly political character, since their ministry is to reach all the faithful and all the citizens."

On the basis of this unequivocal statement, there was no place for a Catholic party, even if Mexico had been a territory favorable for the rearing up of such an opposition party.

This did not mean that political parties which might be opposed to many aspects of the present regime and the policies of the Mexican Revolution could not seek in Catholic social teaching a basis for their programs. This is precisely what *Acción Nacional* has done. The movement is important because of its recent foundation, its leadership and the content of its program. *Acción Nacional* came into existence in 1939 through the effort of a dis-

4 An important collection of the papal directives on this point as well as on "Catholic Action" in general is *Pio XI y la Acción Católica Mexicana (Documentos)* published by the Secretariado Social Mexicano in 1939.

tinguished Mexican lawyer, Manuel Gómez Morín, to gather together a group of able and talented younger men who would undertake to create a national conscience along traditional lines, enlightened by the needs of the present time. Gómez Morín himself is one of the ablest lawyers in the republic, a brilliant expert in fiscal and monetary matters and a person of the highest personal prestige and reputation. His career began when he was barely in his twenties and was named Under-Secretary of Finance at the time that Alvaro Obregón was President. His work in the Ministry was unique. He laid the foundations for important reforms and was responsible primarily for launching the central Banco de México as an expedient and necessary financial measure. In 1933, when he was professor of law in the National University, he was involved, as has already been mentioned, in the fight against Socialist penetration. This attitude catapulted him into the post of Rector where he remained for a year. He found himself the Rector of a University which had been given ten million pesos and had been told to fend for itself on the income from this sum. His career in this position was brief, but to him goes much of the credit for saving the University from the assault leveled against it by the extreme left. At this time, he had given thought to the idea of forming a group which would resist the penetration of Marxist doctrine. He did not favor the proposal of many younger Mexicans, that the best way to defeat this type of propaganda was to join the government and influence the administration from within. Gómez Morín favored a permanent organization which would concern itself all the time with the development of a civic consciousness. He interpreted political action as something that occurred day in and day out: as a sort of vigilance exercised on behalf of the Mexican people over the administration of their affairs. It was not merely an event that took place every three or six years when the president was elected or the votes were cast for the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate.

The idea took shape definitely in 1939, on the eve of the elections of 1940. The political atmosphere of Mexico in 1940 was unusual. For the first time, perhaps, since the days of Francisco Madero, there was real hope that the electorate would have relative freedom of choice. The candidacy of Juan Andreu Almazán undoubtedly aroused a high degree of popular enthusiasm. Catholics tended to see in him a better leadership than Mexico had known before. Many others, however, were convinced that Almazán represented exactly the same influences and the same traditions as had prevailed in Mexican politics these many years.

Acción Nacional was formally organized in September of 1939, after a considerable amount of canvassing, of soundings of political opinion and of appraisal throughout the country of the opportuneness of the movement.

The movement was primarily launched by young professional men who had been formed and oriented by Manuel Gómez Morín. It was given impetus by the active participation of outstanding Catholic leaders, such as Efraín González Luna of Guadalajara, able lawyer, and one of the best informed Mexicans on Catholic social doctrine. On September 14, 1939, in the Frontón México, in Mexico City, the constituent assembly of the party was formally opened. Aside from the question of the party platform, the major question debated was that of the participation in the coming elections. There was a sharp division of opinion, since many of the members felt that to take part in the elections, which would probably mean complete defeat, would merely endanger the existence of the party. Since *Acción Nacional* could not, itself, submit a candidate to the Mexican people, it decided to support the opposition candidate for the presidency, seeking in this way to contribute to the overwhelming desire of the people of Mexico for a change of regime and for a cleansing of the administrative stables. The results of the campaign of 1940 are, of course, too well known to require comment here. The official candidate of the Revolutionary Party triumphed.

Acción Nacional began an intensive effort to organize itself throughout the Republic. Since 1940 the increase has been steady. Regional committees were set up, local organizations perfected, leaders chosen and in general the movement sought to establish roots in the soil of Mexico. Its general position may be stated as one of frank and open opposition to the government as it now functions. There is no hesitancy nor vacillation about its program. It works in the light of day and scorns intrigue or anything smacking of subversive activity. It urges constantly that its political activities be carried out within the framework of the law. In terms of Mexican politics, *Acción Nacional* represents the modern, up to date attitude of how to go about things. It is not rooted in the past nor does it conceive of Mexico's future as a return to Porfirio Díaz. It is not, of course, a party that is endorsed by the hierarchy nor does it have any connection with it. It seeks to avoid anything which runs counter to Catholic teaching, but does not maintain any affiliation with nor is it under the direction of the Church. Many of its leaders are active and militant Catholics, well grounded in the social ideas of the Church. Its

leadership represents the best in Mexican life, both professionally and spiritually. There is some criticism of it as excessively intellectual. The appeal of its program and of its expression is perhaps greatest among the professional and middle classes. It does seek constantly to reach the workers and farmers. In some of the states this has been achieved to a greater extent than in others. In Guerrero, for example, *Acción Nacional* has made considerable headway among the rural classes. In the Federal District, on the other hand, it has not been as successful in winning support among the working classes. In the congressional elections of 1943, *Acción Nacional* again determined to enter the campaign. Candidates were submitted in several districts, notably Jalisco, La Laguna, Querétaro Orizaba, Guerrero and the Federal District. There was considerable hope that, with the era of good feeling generated by President Avila Camacho and his real concern for the establishment of the democratic process in Mexico, this election might give the opposition a chance to secure representation in the national congress. Such hopes were shattered when it became evident that the usual strong arm tactics would produce a Senate and a Chamber completely identified with the single dominant party. There was some discouragement and even some defections from *Acción Nacional* as a result of this set-back. The party managed, however, to weather this storm and to carry on its work. The principal agency of publicity is *La Nación,* the editor of which is Carlos Septién, and which is admirably presented. Perhaps no weekly publication in Mexico can vie with it for excellence of content and generally high level.

Synarchism

It is obviously impracticable to analyze in a few lines the content and the tendencies of a movement as complex and as debatable as Synarchism. The important thing is to indicate something of its origin, program and the present status of its activities. No modern Mexican movement has aroused as much interest abroad nor been accused of more villainies. Its influance has crossed the Rio Grande to affect a few Mexicans living within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States. The movement is the cause of endless diatribe on the part of the official Mexican labor organizations and the official party. It is pilloried day in and day out in posters and handbills. It has been accused of close collaboration with the Nazis; its program

has been denounced as Fascist. Its leaders have been charged with every national and international sin within the imagination of man.

The movement began in May of 1937 in the state of Guanajuato where several lawyers, including Manuel Zermeno, José Trueba Olivares and Salvador Abascal were instrumental in launching the idea. A leading figure in this effort was an agriculturist, José Antonio Urquiza. The National Synarchist Union was the consequence of these conversations. Its program was conceived as a reaction against the stridencies of the Mexican Revolution; against the unspiritual character of the trend of affairs in the Republic. It was conceived of as a profoundly popular movement since the original Synarchists affirmed their abiding faith in the virtues of the common people of Mexico, untouched to a large degree by the corruption of the times. In this way, Synarchism became at once a movement of masses. Its appeal was directed primarily to the farmers and workers. The results in terms of numbers have been nothing short of astonishing. The assumption of the movement is that Mexico is in a state of anarchy, thanks to decades of "corruptive doctrines disseminated by the revolutionaries." It declares over and over again that it is not a political party and does not aspire to be such; that it is a social movement the purpose of which is to establish in the hearts of the Mexican people sound principles which in due time will make possible the realization of a Christian social order. The reference to a "Christian Order" is constant in Synarchist literature and in the official organ of the movement, *El Sinarquista.* It is profoundly national if not avowedly nationalistic and claims to reject all foreign tutelage and influence, be it from the left or from the right. It formally condemns totalitarianism, dictatorships and tyrannies.

Much space is devoted to the problem of liberty and its limitations, to what is termed "libertinism" and its dangers. Democracy, that is simply liberalism in the old sense, it opposes. It asks for a new kind of democracy. The program reiterates over and over again the well-known phrases of "dignity of the human person" and "the common good." The Christian social order, assert the Synarchists, is the essential goal of their program of activity. The Synarchist movement revealed itself early in its history as made up of zealous persons bent on carrying these ideas to the great mass of Mexicans. The missionary attitude was extremely pronounced and resulted in the most outstanding characteristic of the followers of Synarchism: their utter and com-

plete willingness to suffer death if need be for the cause. In many parts of the Republic, Synarchist demonstrations were broken up with violence. The movement, which denies consistently that it is a political party and wishes no part in electoral activities, refused to allow its members to go armed. Thousands of peasants have marched without a single revolver among them and not a few fell victims to the bitter antagonism of their enemies. The movement acquired the potency and the force of mysticism.

One comment made by a most responsible member of the Mexican clergy is to the effect that Synarchism is in reality a movement of mass mysticism, with tremendous possibilities and equally tremendous dangers. It is the type of thing that if controlled and curbed may achieve remarkable progress, and which, precisely because of its intense emotionalism, its fervor, and its reckless disregard for the conveniences of ordinary politics, can easily become disoriented.

The denial of political intentions leads the Synarchists to affirm that their movement is purely social and that their meetings are nothing more than the gathering of Mexican citizens to ask for a redress of grievances or to examine the social deficiencies under which they live. The strength of Synarchism in large part has come from the rigid adherence to the law and a refusal to go outside of it. There is nothing of the *Cristero* spirit in Synarchism and no note of the sentiment which some Catholics once held that violence and bloodshed was the only way of gaining a chance to be heard.

Synarchism is especially vehement in its denunciation of Communism and of what it claims to be the attempts of the Mexican government, especially the former administration, to impose Communistic ideas on the country. The movement expressly condemns Nazism, Fascism and the other forms of totalitarianism. In a clear declaration it is stated "Synarchism maintains that no social program could prosper in Mexico on the principles of Nazism, Fascism or any other form of totalitarian government. Totalitarianism would be the death and destruction of all the efforts of Synarchism, of all its sacrifices and of all its hopes." Naturally the enemies of the movement did not believe this declaration. Unfortunately the terms *totalitarianism, Nazi-Fascist, fifth columnist* and the like have become through overuse and misuse the standard epithets of our day. They are the terms applied to anyone whom one may not like, just as in the old days, *Communist* was hurled at practically everyone who suggested, no matter how mildly, that some of the aspects of the present social

order might well be changed. They are merely the up-to-date and modern lexicon of diatribe which has a well-known precursor in the nineteenth century use in Latin America of *Masons* for everyone whom Catholics did not like and *Jesuits* for everyone whom those of the liberal or leftist persuasion did not like. The Synarchists have been denounced as the vanguard of Nazi-Fascist penetration over and over again. This technique has begun to wear a little thin and there is no evidence whatsoever that the charges are true. One of the most oft repeated accusations was that Synarchism was founded in 1935 by a German, Oscar Schreiter, and that it was supported financially by the Church. Neither contention is correct. Clerical influence, if it exists, has been slight and at no time has there been any attempt to link the interests of the Mexican Church as such to the movement. Special care has always been taken to make clear that the Church is not behind the movement or in any manner attached to its fortunes.

The Synarchist program emphasizes what it calls Christian democracy. The problem of education receives considerable attention, and especially the famous Article III of the Constitution of which mention has been made. Synarchism denounces, in unrestricted terms, this statute and proposes the most absolute liberty of education in the country. The movement seeks above all to reach the 70 or 80 per cent of the Mexicans who live on the land. It is in the remote rural districts and small villages throughout the country that Synarchism has managed to gain thousands of partisans. The reading of the communications from the provinces in the columns of *El Sinarquista* are particularly revealing on this point. The enthusiasm, fervor and spirit of self-sacrifice that these texts reveal are profoundly moving.

Synarchism on the economic plane proposes that the system of the large estates be strictly limited. Land ownership is proclaimed as indispensable for the prosperity of the family and hence its division among the peasantry is necessary and recommendable. The program of the movement calls attention to the inadequacies of the present *ejido* system, its failure to realize its full purposes and the misery in which many of the farmers find themselves. This is pointed out as one of the gravest dangers for the stability of the Republic. "The principal mission of Synarchism is to reconstruct Mexico's agriculture." On the side of labor, Synarchism affirms its faith in the organization of labor, but deplores the existence of what is termed the demagoguery of the

present labor organizations, led by rapacious individuals who exploit the membership of the workers.

One of the most interesting projects of Synarchism was the colonization scheme in Lower California. The undertaking had its origins in 1941 on the most desolate part of the long coast facing the Pacific Ocean, and the enterprise is still under way with between 400 and 500 persons engaged in winning a living from the inhospitable soil of that peninsula. No claim to the land existed and according to Synarchism, Mexico might in due time find her sovereignty to that area seriously challenged. The project had the approval of President Avila Camacho. Salvador Abascal, then leader of the movement, established himself personally in that area as part of the impetus to the colonization project.

One of the common charges launched against the movement is that it is hostile to the United States and its policies. The problem is not as simple as appears at first glance. As has been stated in another part of this study, the attitude toward the United States is not the result of momentary circumstance nor of the exigencies of the war. Mental reservations about the United States do not necessarily mean that the person holding them is sympathetic to the Axis. The incredible over-simplification in which most of us indulge has produced a type of thinking in which only constant paens of praise to the United States are convincing evidence of the loyalty to the cause of democracy. Many Mexicans are unable to see the problem in this somewhat naïve light. A century of Mexican Catholic suspicions of the United States cannot be scotched in a few years or even a decade. The Catholic mentality of Mexico has been formed and developed through years of experience in which the United States has been seen as a nation exercising enormous pressure on Mexico and supporting those movements which were repugnant to the sentiments of Catholics. This cannot be eradicated at once, no matter how sane and honest the present policy of the United States may be. Synarchism reflects in large measure this traditional attitude. It reflects also the opposition to the older liberalism which had been appended to the democracies. It explains that it "tries sincerely to participate in the attitude and viewpoint of the United States" and hopes that "the United States will always have in mind Mexico's point of view, its traditions, the religious faith of its people, and will nurse no desire to impose a foreign culture upon it." If Synarchism is not anti-American in the ordinary

sense of the word, it is probably nearer the truth to say that it follows the line of watchful waiting.

The most startling developments in regard to Synarchism have come during the month of May. There were rumors to the effect that Salvador Abascal had left the movement as early as April. On May 17, 1944, the Mexico City daily, *Novedades,* published a long statement in which he explained the reasons for his resignation from the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista,* and the charges which he held against his successor, Manuel Torres Bueno. Aside from a number of points of purely personal concern, there were points of grave discrepancy regarding policy and the idea that Synarchism should become a political party. Abascal accused Torres Bueno of withholding assistance for the colony in Lower California. He was categoric in denying the utility of making the movement political. He commented caustically that even if Synarchism did become a political party and chose to resist the influence of the official party, what hope did an independent movement have against the armed force upon which the opposition could count? At the conclusion of his declaration, Abascal announced that Trueba Olivares and several others of influence and prestige in the movement had resigned with him. The present leader did not reply to these charges. The left wing elements of course were filled with elation and glee. The Party of the Mexican Revolution at once issued a statement to the effect that the words of Abascal revealed "the criminal and obscure in the political and economic motives of Synarchism." Deputy Salvador Ochoa Rentería burst into print without delay to declare that Abascal's statement proved that the many accusations he had made in the Chamber of Deputies against Synarchism were well founded.

The Mexico City weekly, *Tiempo,* which is anything but favorable to the so-called "right," devotes the principal article of its issue of May 19, 1944, to the crisis within the ranks of the Synarchists. It called attention to the curious fact that in July of 1943, a meeting of the Mexican Communist Party revealed openly that there were two antagonistic groups within its organization. At the same time, so it is said, the Synarchists, who were meeting not far away, showed evidence of the same process of division. The split in the Communist ranks took three months to become public knowledge; that of the Synarchists nine months. One of the most curious of the statements included in this report is that attributed to Salvador Abascal, who allegedly said that "while I was Chief of the movement, the Catholic Church had nothing to

do with the organization nor with the determination of its policy. I would not be prepared to say as much at the present time." This, of course, must be taken with the proverbial *granum salis,* coming as it does from an ex-leader now in controversy with the present chief of the movement.

In the issue of December 23, 1943, the text of the address of José Trueba Olivares was printed in which this Synarchist leader asserted that the United States was certainly not responsible for all of the ills of Mexico and that Synarchism could not stand for an anti-American brand of Hispanism. The national leader of the movement had made a statement to foreign correspondents at about the same time in which he condemned the process of dehispanization of the peoples of Latin America and urged that Pan-Americanism and Hispanism be understood as two forces which were by no means antagonistic. He concluded by saying that "we believe that the culture and the Christian origins of the peoples of the Americas are the best basis for the achievement of continental unity."

A word to indicate the latest development. Late in June *El Sinarquista* published two articles which were interpreted as seditious. In one, the government was denounced as irresponsible and incapable of coping with the menace of Communism. The Synarchists had been insisting that everything pointed to a general strike which was to be the prelude to a Communist attempt to seize control. In a second article, an appeal was made to the Mexican army to thwart this attempt, assuring the troops that the Synarchists were ready to stand with them in the defense of Mexico. The articles were seized upon immediately as evidence of the treasonable character of the movement. The files and archives of the national headquarters were confiscated and examined by the appropriate authority. The responsible editors of the paper were submitted to endless questioning. The upshot was a series of measures to reduce the external activity of Synarchism. No printing establishment could accept material for printing from Synarchist sources without suffering a severe penalty. No meetings, concentrations or other forms of action were to be tolerated. It is significant, however, that in spite of the strenuous measures adopted, outright suppression did not occur. To date, the President has signed no decree outlawing Synarchism and dissolving it as a social movement. Synarchism is passing through its most critical stage. The Abascal dénouement served as something of a purge, with perhaps less serious consequences than originally anticipated. The more recent incidents have proved more difficult.

It does not mean, to be sure, that Synarchism as a movement will not survive the ordeal. On the contrary, it is not inconceivable that it may derive considerable profit from the experience.

It would be hazardous to judge of the future of Synarchism at this juncture. The present crisis may be far from mortal. It may be purely internal and lacking in consequences for the entire undertaking. Synarchism is unquestionably one of the most remarkable mass movements to come out of Hispanic America. It is useless to judge it, as is so frequently done, as a sort of Falange Española in the New World. The un-military and unaggressive character of Synarchism is the very antithesis of the militancy and fanfare of Falange. As an expression of Mexican traditionalism, enveloped in the modern garb of social justice and agrarian reform, it merits the attention of Americans.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Discuss Catholic opinion on the organization of a Catholic political party; Pope Pius XI's instructions on Catholic social teaching as a basis for political programs.
2. Who is Gómez Morín? What has been his career? his political ideas?
3. When was Acción Nacional established? By whom? How is it organized? What are its program and policy? The character of its leadership? The type of people it attempts to reach?
4. What has been the success of Acción Nacional as far as elections are concerned? What is the principle of *La Nación*?
5. In what opinion is Synarchism held? When was Synarchism formed? By whom?
6. Discuss Synarchism: (a) as a popular, social, national movement; (b) the zeal of Synarchist members; the movement as "mass mysticism"; adherence to the law; anti-totalitarianism; charges made against it.
7. What is the Synarchist program regarding education? land ownership and limitations? agriculture? labor? colonization?
8. What is the Synarchist attitude toward U. S.-Mexican relations? What is the traditional Mexican attitude?
9. Discuss recent developments of Synarchism: (a) the internal split; (b) attempts to reconcile Pan Americanism and Hispanism; (c) appeal to Mexican army, consequent restrictive measures; (d) prospects for future.

Suggested Readings

"The Political Scene in Mexico," Richard Pattee. *America,* Aug. 12, 1944. LXXI, 19.

"The Mexican Scene: Synarchism," Richard Pattee. *America,* Aug. 19, 1944. LXXI, 20.

"A Note on Mexican Synarchism," Edward Skillin, Jr. *The Commonweal,* Vol. XL, No. 8, June 9, 1944.

"L'économie agricole du pays," J. Ledit. *Relations,* Montreal. November, 1943.

Our Good Neighbor Hurdle, John W. White. Bruce. Milwaukee. 1943. Chapter VIII.

V. "CATHOLIC ACTION" AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The pontifical documents regarding Mexico emphasize, without exception, the central theme, that the sole solution of the acute problems that the Church faces in the Republic is the lay organization—"Catholic Action"—working with and under the Bishops. No other course is open to the Hierarchy in its task of diffusing Catholic doctrine and ideas. In the address of the Holy Father to the Mexican pilgrims on June 2, 1931, the question of "Catholic Action" occupied the attention of the Pontiff. After pointing out that the principal criticism made against "Catholic Action" was that it engaged in politics, the Pope stated: "Catholic Action, including that of Mexico, in spite of the sufferings and terrible persecution which it has suffered, should not devote attention to politics. Its mission is spiritual; the formation of Christian consciences."

Mexican Catholics must be fitted into the total picture of the fluctuating fortunes of the Church under the persecution. It has well been said that the period from 1929 to 1932 was, in some respects, more difficult for Catholics in Mexico than the extreme persecution of 1926-1929. One of the reasons was that the form and tactics took a different turn; the methods changed and in many ways became more subtle. Many Catholics expected the persecution to cease at once upon the culmination of the agreements of 1929. Their disappointment was keen and bitter when the course of events did not confirm this happy expectation. There was division within Catholic ranks. The policy of moderation, imposed by the Hierarchy, did not please many. Rebelliousness took the place of loyal submission to the will of the Hierarchy. The use of armed force was looked upon by many as licit and necessary. The Encyclical *Acerba Animi* came in response to this grave crisis. His Holiness re-examines the background of the Mexican situation, with specific reference to the unsatisfactory results of the 1929 agreements. After clarifying the infamous character of the restrictions that still lay heavily on the clergy and bishops, the Pope reiterated with equal vigor the instructions given in 1926, regarding "Catholic Action": "We recommend once again what is close to our heart; the necessity of establishing and developing ever more intensively and on a wider scale the work of Catholic Action." The communication, *Firmissimam Constantian* of March 28, 1937, completes this collection of papal pronouncements on "Catholic Action" and its function in Mexico. His Holiness devotes the larger part of this

letter to detailed instructions on the formation of the membership of "Catholic Action," the importance of the lay apostolate and the anxiety felt for the development of this vital work in a nation like Mexico, so long buffeted by the adverse fortunes of the persecution. The sacrament of baptism imposes the obligation of "Catholic Action." "Catholic Action" proceeds from charity and its scope of work includes the alleviation of the temporal and corporal ills that beset mankind. Because, the Pontiff states, "frequently souls are not reached except through ministering to bodily needs and the economic necessities." The letter urges that special attention be given to the needs of the farmers, workers and Indians. The very special task of caring for the spiritual and physical welfare of the Mexicans who have migrated to the United States does not escape mention in the Pope's communication. In like manner he emphasizes that "Catholic Action" cannot neglect the universities since there is no milieu perhaps which needs more urgently the attention of those motivated by love for Christ and His Church. Although political activity is again condemned, the wide jurisdiction of "Catholic Action" is suggested. It includes the bringing together of organizations devoted to the purposes which the Pope had already indicated as legitimate. The field includes the defense of the freedom of the schools and of the teaching of religion; the defense of the family, of marriage and of public morals; and the spiritual improvement and perfection of its members and those with whom they come in contact.

Some of the antecedents of Mexican "Catholic Action" are important in order to evaluate its work with greater precision. Prior to the actual establishment of "Catholic Action," the priests of the Society of Jesus organized the *Asociación de Damas Católicas Mexicanas* in September of 1912 and the *Asociación Católica de Juventud Mexicana* in August of 1913. The *Juventud Católica Feminina Mexicana,* closely related to the establishment of *Cultura Feminina,* already mentioned, came into existence during the very moment when the persecution was at its peak, in 1926, under the leadership of Father Miguel Dario Miranda, now Bishop Miranda, whose service to the cause of "Catholic Action" in Mexico is absolutely inestimable.

Mexican "Catholic Action" was launched officially on Christmas Eve, 1929. As soon as the agreement of 1929 had been reached in June of that year a commission was named to work out the details for establishing "Catholic Action." This commission consisted of Father Miranda, Monsignor Manuel Fulcheri y Pietra Santa, Bishop of Zamora; Father Ramón Martínez

Silva, S.J., and Father Rafael Dávila Vilches. Under the guidance of Archbishop Pascual Díaz, the proposal was submitted to all the members of the Hierarchy. The statutes of the organization and the purposes outlined are in complete harmony with the thought of His Holiness as expressed in the encyclicals, *Ubi Arcano Dei* and the letter *Quae Nobis*. The organizations mentioned above as preceding "Catholic Action" were merged in the new institution.

Four basic organizations constitute the structure of Mexican "Catholic Action": *Unión de Católicos Mexicanos,* for older men; *Asociación Católica de Juventud Mexicana,* for unmarried men under thirty-five years; *Unión Feminina Católica Mexicana* for older women and finally *Juventud Católica Feminina Mexicana* for younger women. Moreover, "Catholic Action" brings together all other Catholic societies and organizations. All associations whose purpose is some form of lay apostolate constitute confederated bodies, such as the *Congregaciones Marianas* which have some 25,000 members. Other groups not specifically of this character are considered as auxiliary entities, such as the Boy Scouts.

The most striking note of Mexican "Catholic Action" is that it is organized along national and not diocesan lines. This was the expressed wish of the members of the Hierarchy who sought permission from Rome to form the association in this fashion. Although it functions on the basis of diocesan and parish subdivisions, "Catholic Action" is not a diocesan matter but is concentrated in the hands of national directors who are above diocesan jurisdictions, in a certain sense. This avoids friction between dioceses, centers attention on the national character of the problem, aids in avoiding sharp differentiation between territories more favored than others and produces a uniform orientation of the first importance. Mexican "Catholic Action," without taking into account the affiliated bodies, has at the present time 400,000 members. The *Asociación Católica de Juventud Mexicana* has 60,000, distributed in 900 parishes and 33 dioceses. During the persecution, let it be added, some eighty young men gave their lives for the cause of the Church and the glory of God.

Mexican "Catholic Action" began its work in 1929 with the holding of intensive study circles for the purpose of preparing both clergy and laity for leadership in this work. The propaganda was organized to cover every parish in the Archdiocese of Mexico and later extended to the rest of the country. As some indications of the progress of the work, the single branch of *Juventud Católica Feminina Mexicana* achieved the following re-

sults between December, 1929, and June, 1930: 22 diocesan organizations; 133 parish groups, 124 circles and 8,605 young women listed as members. In 1932 the number of parish organizations had increased to 299 and the study circles to 496. The second annual meeting of the association in 1934 reported that membership had reached 31,107. In order to avoid too many figures, let it be said that in 1938 the members numbered 74,073 and in 1942, 102,491. Nearly a thousand parishes were organized for this purpose by the latter year. It would be tiresome to recount figure by figure the growth and expansion of each of these organizations and its subsidiaries. The indication given in the case of one women's group may be taken as an example of the manner in which "Catholic Action" has expanded over the period of fifteen years since its foundation.

In addition to "Catholic Action" as such, mention may be made of another important Catholic organization, which unfortunately has declined considerably during the past years. This is the *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos,* a federated student group under "Catholic Action." This is aside from the student membership in the appropriate branch of "Catholic Action." The U. N. E. C. was founded prior to "Catholic Action" by the then Archbishop, José Mora y del Río, and the first counsellor was Father Agustín Pro of the Society of Jesus. In 1931 it was received into "Catholic Action." This Mexican student association contributed directly to the creation of the international organization, *Confederación Iberoamericana de Estudiantes Católicos,* formed in Rome in 1933. In 1934, the U. N. E. C. was admitted to the international federation of Pax Romana. There are at present some 1,500 members, organized in a national committee and fifteen regional committees. Six national congresses of this student group have been held to date.

"Catholic Action" is today one of the main forces in Catholic life in Mexico. The influence it is exerting is a source of enormous strength to the Church. Its national organization and complete integration avoids friction and gives it a power which no similar organization has ever had in Mexican Catholic life.[5]

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5 To avoid citing numerous pamphlets and stray articles, it may be said that an excellent source for information on the ideas and proposals of Mexican "Catholic Action" are the booklets published as a result of the various national gatherings. The number covering the fifth national assembly, for example, in 1941 is particularly helpful for its exposition of "Catholic Action" in relation to the various social classes: workers, intellectuals, employers, farmers, etc. *Biblioteca de la Junta Central de la Acción Católica Mexicana,* Mexico, D. F., Mexico.

Eucharistic Congresses

It would be out of place to list all the Eucharistic Congresses held over Mexico during the past years. The number has increased and with the increase has come the complicated question of adhering strictly to the law with reference to no religious manifestations outside the churches. The Congress held in Vera Cruz late in 1943 was of such proportions that there was no serious effort made to stop the processions. In the diocese of Tulancingo, Bishop Miranda prudently and wisely refrained from certain parts of his week's program in order to avoid any friction. In Jalapa, in the state of Vera Cruz, recently, the enthusiasm of the people led to unfortunate incidents in which one or two priests were stoned. In a word, the popular feeling of faith is so keen that it is almost impossible to avoid religious activities in public. The Eucharistic Congresses have been, unhappily, one of the causes of certain conflict with the authorities, precisely because of their greater visibility.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What is "Catholic Action" and why is it so important in the solution of the Church's problem in Mexico?
2. What is its task and scope? What are the principal documents of Pope Pius XI relating to "Catholic Action" in Mexico?
3. Name the institutions of Catholic women in existence before the establishment of "Catholic Action" in Mexico.
4. Discuss: (a) the founding; (b) the component organizations; (c) the national organizational structure, of Mexican "Catholic Action."
5. What has been the extent of its growth?
6. What is the Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos?
7. What place have Eucharistic Congresses held in the Catholic revival in Mexico?

Suggested Readings

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VI. CATHOLIC PUBLIC OPINION ON INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS

Is there a Catholic opinion as such in Mexico? The question is pertinent as regards this country as well as any other. Catholics generally are notorious for the widest discrepancies of viewpoint on almost every conceivable subject except the dogmas of the Church. Mexico is no different. It would be hopeless to evaluate any given trends or tendencies in Mexican Catholic opinion. It varies on internal matters and on international. References have been made to the existence of one sector of Mexican Catholic opinion which is utterly unwilling to make any concessions to the times. There are certain prominent Catholics who consider anything but open warfare with the government as practically a betrayal of the Church. There is a strong nationalist sentiment in this sector, and there are organizations, weak, to be sure, that cherish extreme principles and cultivate a completely introspective, militant and unbending attitude. It may in part flow from an aristocratic tradition or from a Falangist type of thinking which affects even local problems. There are other sectors of Catholic thinking which are more atune with the times, which take realities into account and appreciate that the moderation and sagacity of the present Archbishop, Monsignor Martínez, is the wisest possible course for the welfare of the Church in Mexico. But the important thing is that there is no agreement all down the line. There are wide differences. In student circles there are organizations which have sprung up within the walls of the University under allegedly Catholic auspices and which have openly waged warfare on other Catholic student organizations. There is an abundance of tugging and pulling which weakens the position of the Church and contributes nothing to its service.

It would not be incorrect to state that Mexican Catholic opinion on international matters revolves around four topics or central themes: (1) Relations with the United States, (2) The position toward the Franco regime in Spain, (3) The Soviet Union and particularly activities of the Soviet Embassy in Mexico and (4) The broad purposes and aims of the United Nations in the present war. On any of these points, it would be impossible to obtain authorized statements and still less would it be possible to ascertain to what degree Catholic opinion is compact or divided.

The problem of relations with the United States is always latent in any discussion of Mexican affairs. The long and stormy history of such relations, the fact that the Mexican memory is singularly retentive and the mental reservations of the Mexicans toward every effort of the United States, all bear on the general attitude. It would not be an error to assert that Mexican Catholics by and large are at the best reservedly friendly toward the trend of events in inter-American relations and are definitely of the watchful waiting persuasion. There are irritants which clutter up the general landscape of happy relations. The enormous personnel of the various American government agencies in Mexico, the acute problem of the *braceros,* the tradition on the part of many Catholics to view with a jaundiced eye whatever the government in power does, good or bad, and the general impression that relations with the United States ought to reach more directly Catholic interests. The whole problem resolves itself into a matter of what is considered interference or undue influence. The degree of hostility or friendship runs from that manifested by such unreliable and unrepresentative newspapers as *El Hombre Libre* and *Omega* which see in every act of the United States the work of a red-Jewish-Wall Street combine, to the honest and candid appraisals given by responsible journalists such as Mariano Alcocer, who in *Novedades* in February wrote quite openly that, for good or for bad, Mexico was bound to remain in the shadow of the United States and the thing to do was to accept gracefully the fatality and work out relations mutually advantageous. A young columnist, Eduardo Enrique Ríos, discoursed on the same theme in terms which showed a complete recognition of realities. He emphasized the fallacy of thinking of Our Lady of Guadalupe as anti-American, an attitude taken by some Mexicans. He urged that this somewhat infantile notion be dropped and a frank and sincere attempt at working out difficulties and discrepancies be reached. The instances could be multiplied to show this same viewpoint.

The war has placed a heavy burden on Mexico. The evidences of its effects are to be seen everywhere in the soaring prices, the scarcities and the heavy demands made on the not very effective Mexican industries and transportation. It is probably true to say that the enthusiasm of the Mexican government for co-operation with the United States is not shared by the great mass of Mexicans. The sources of hostility are too fresh and not enough has been done to heal the sores. The more thoughtful and more cosmopolitan appreciate realities, the mass of laity and even

clergy are perplexed at many aspects of American life, at the startling assiduity with which Mexico is cultivated, and the absence of clear guarantees as to the future. The United States is still viewed in a light only once removed from Vera Cruz, the Pershing expedition, Big Stick diplomacy and general meddling in Mexican internal affairs.

The nub of the problem is quite simple. Catholic opinion in the broad follows this thesis:

> Mexican history, from Iturbide to the present time is merely a series of governments which have taken power thanks to the recognition of the United States and often with the active aid of that government. The United States since the days of Joel Poinsett has systematically favored the so-called liberals, leftists and anti-clericals. Never has a gesture indicated the slightest sympathy or understanding of the place and work of the Church. American support has kept every revolutionary government in power and has created the impression that the United States would not view with disapproval a radical reduction of the influence of the Church.

Whatever may be the historical justification for the accusation or whatever may be the attenuating circumstances, the bald fact is that the thesis as just stated is anchored deep in the conscience of most Mexican Catholics. It is a strong and hereditary sentiment which cannot be easily eradicated. Superficially there may be cordiality. Intimately there is downright reluctance to establish too intimate terms with the nation which, from this point of view, despoiled and browbeat the Mexican people. It is not something to be argued away as belonging to the past. This is no effort to present the viewpoint as justified or not. It merely exists and is a determining factor in much of Mexican Catholic thinking.

The question of Franco Spain is still more touchy. Here we are faced by the peculiarly difficult problem that the Mexican government is practically the only one in Latin America that has never recognized the present Spanish regime. On top of that, Mexico became the refuge of thousands of Spanish who had defended the Republic, among them many of the most important political leaders such as Indalecio Prieto and Martínez Barrios. Spanish intellectuals of republican sympathies have filled Mexico and have been received with the generous and warm hospitality with which Mexico has always thrown its doors open to foreign

refugees. The presence of such a strong contingent of Spaniards, who on the soil of the New World have continued their concern for Spanish affairs and who constantly express their preoccupations in organizations, meetings and the press, causes the abyss between the anti-Franco and pro-Franco partisans to be wider than would normally be the case. Catholic sentiment is by no means unanimous on this question. While not much has crept into writings, there are those who view the trend of affairs in Spain with considerable trepidation and are not wont to accept the thesis that the Franco regime is synonymous with the well-being of the Church. Other Mexican Catholics, notably such first class intellectuals as Alfonso Junco, Toribio Esquivel Obregón, Jesús Guisa y Acevedo and others have been veritable paladins of the Franco cause and have championed with ardor the cause of Hispanic fraternity.

This view must be fitted into the controversy raging everywhere regarding Hispanidad and its implications. Mexican Catholics insist, as one of the rock bottom principles which cannot be debated, that the ties binding Mexico to Spain historically and culturally are of such a nature that nothing can break them. The devotion to the traditional source of culture and the life of the spirit frequently produces a strong sympathy for the Franco regime and its program. *Acción Nacional,* for example, in its program, states that the "most cordial economic, political and cultural relations should be maintained with all Hispanic countries and that most particularly relations should be re-established with Spain." Similar emphasis is laid on the profound community of spirit and of culture that binds the Hispanic world together. This reflects what may be called a general sentiment. Obviously events of the most recent period relating to the present war have influenced the degree of enthusiasm for Franco and his regime. There are many Catholics who are reluctant to accept the articles of faith of Falange. It is probably true, however, that the majority of Catholics, in so far as they are concerned at all with the problem, are sympathetic to the Franco government. As has been stated, this must be definitely fixed into the framework of the extremely anti-Franco position of the Mexican government. Again, it becomes part and parcel of the broader internal question of opposition *per se* to the government in power. Nonrecognition of Franco may produce in part a Catholic reaction more favorable to the Spanish ruler than would ordinarily be the case.

The case of the attitude toward the Soviet Union is much more

difficult. It is related to the conviction of Mexican Catholics that Communism represents for Mexico a vastly greater immediate danger than for any other Latin American country. In the United States organized Communism as such, as distinguished from the various affiliated movements, has represented a relatively minor portion of the population. In Mexico Communism either in the form of the Mexican Communist Party or through Communist sympathies in other organizations has been for many years a potent force. Mexicans are therefore likely to see in Communism a more direct menace than in National Socialism, let us say, the consequences of which have not been brought home to them so pointedly. The Mexican Communist Party, under the leadership of Dionisio Encinas, Hernán Laborde and others is neither a large nor a very powerful organization as such. Its strength lies in its tactics and in the excellence of many of its leaders. The congress of the Mexican Communist Party, held in Mexico City on May 12, 1944, revealed the prestige the group has attained thanks to the trend of the times. The President of the Party of the Mexican Revolution, Antonio Villalobos, present as a guest, addressed the gathered Communists and assured them that the idea that their doctrine was a threat to social and political stability was so much nonsense. Moreover, the Communist Party requested that it be allowed to affiliate with the Party of the Mexican Revolution. The leaders of the latter group expressed themselves as willing to accede to this suggestion. The idea? The usual "boring from within." The Communist Party has discussed the change of its name to *Mexican Socialist Party* and perhaps the taking over in due course of time of as much as possible of the Party of the Mexican Revolution which is, in spite of its vicissitudes, the one single, dominant party and more or less a going concern.

The number of organizations expressing sympathy for the Soviet Union are numerous. The most important, because of its activities, energy and general propaganda, is that known as the *Amigos de la URSS,* the Friends of the Soviet Union. The diplomatic mission, under the leadership of the present Russian Ambassador, has undoubtedly contributed to the warm sentiments entertained for the Soviet Union and the constant publicity given to its war efforts and military successes. Mexican Catholics are particularly sensitive to this. They are fearful that the Russian victory will give rise to a new and unexpected upswing of pro-Russian, pro-Communist and anti-Catholic sentiment. That Russian influence and prestige is on the upgrade in Mexico can admit

of no serious doubt, and Mexico is being used as a base of operations throughout all Latin America.

On the present war in general, it would be hazardous to say that Mexican Catholics are united. The Hierarchy expressed its full support of the government when war was declared on the Axis. Catholic leaders as such, including, for example, Manuel Gómez Morín, immediately urged that their supporters lend every aid to the government in the common cause, even though many had been among the most ardent partisans of strict neutrality. One of the most interesting indications of the position of Mexican Catholicism *vis a vis* the issues of the day is the the public address of Mariano Alcocer, given in the Palace of Fine Arts in October of 1942. At that time, the Committee on Civilian Defense organized a series of lectures by persons representing diverse tendencies. In the name of the Church and to express the position of the Archbishop, Mariano Alcocer was invited to speak. Aside from the importance of his statement, the astonishing thing is that this was the first time perhaps in decades that a Catholic spokesman had been invited by an official agency to speak in public on matters pertaining directly to the Church.

The statement was officially approved by the ecclesiastical censors and may be taken as the viewpoint of the Mexican Church. The topic developed was *"La Iglesia y el Totalitarismo"* ("The Church and Totalitarianism"), an able and brilliantly organized exposition of the views of the Church on questions affecting the modern world through the menace of totalitarianism. The address is a complete and absolute condemnation, on the basis of papal pronouncements, of Nazism, racism and the various manifestations that totalitarianism has taken. Sr. Alcocer proceeded to recite the story of the efforts of the Holy Father to maintain peace and avoid the tragedy to which Nazism was inevitably leading. He included mention specifically of the valiant resistance of other great Catholic leaders to the barbarism of our times: Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop Groeber, the Fulda Pastorals, Cardinal Gerlier in France and the legion of others who have lifted their voices in defense of human dignity and the rights of man and of the Church. The speaker reiterated the statement of the Archbishop, given on May 30, 1942, to the effect that the civil authority is the one charged with determining the international position of a nation. It is the duty of Catholics to support the civil power, unless it be evidently contrary to conscience. In

the case of doubt, the government should be supported. This is perhaps the clearest and most pungent expression of the Catholic position and defines without the least ambiguity the attitude of the Hierarchy and in all probability of most responsible Catholics.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Discuss the general divergencies of Catholic opinion in Mexico.
2. Explain the reasons for the general attitude toward relations with the United States.
3. What is the opinion regarding the Franco regime in Spain?
4. Describe the activities of Communism and the Soviet Embassy in Mexico. What effect do these have on Catholic opinion in Mexico?
5. What is the attitude with regard to the purposes and aims of the United Nations in the present war?

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VII. THE CHURCH AND THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

It would be pure audacity to deal with the complex problem of land tenure and the indigenous population in a few brief pages. The question of land and its distribution is obviously the factor *sine qua non* in Mexican economy. The question has been treated *ad nauseam* by scores of writers. Some have seen in the organization of the *ejido,* or communal lands, "Mexico's way out." Others have given high praise to the efforts of the government to break up the great estates and bring into existence the small land owner. The question of a just transfer of lands is also at stake. Many Catholics, guided mainly by their bitterness toward the government and the Revolution have been prone to condemn completely not only the execution of the agrarian laws but the purpose and idea behind the laws. There is still in Mexico a very strong *hacendado* mentality among many Catholics. Their systematic opposition to the government in its economic program is in part a reflection of the animosity generated during the religious controversy. The type of mind which engaged in the Cristero movement, which opposed the instructions of the Holy See to seek a *modus vivendi,* and not to involve the name of the Church in an armed insurrection, on the basis that the Pope was misinformed and deliberately led astray, is a mind which still exists and which has to be reckoned with in all considerations of the Catholic question in Mexico. This viewpoint is not shared by the younger generation of Catholics, except in extreme cases. Some of the older leaders, who lived through the trying days of 1926-29 and who were involved in the *Junta de Defensa Religiosa,* have been unable to adapt themselves to the times. A few extremists form the *Escuadra Tradicionalista* which is decidedly out of touch with the trend of the times. Most Catholic leaders accept the reality of the reform, many are not unwilling to accept that on the land side the Revolution performed a task which sooner or later had to be performed. The Mexican land question could not go on as it was under Porfirio Díaz. Whatever may be said of the Díaz regime, and it has its defenders, its program in the rural areas was obviously out of harmony with the terrible necessities of Mexico's millions of Indians and farmers. Responsible Catholic thinking today does not reject the idea of land distribution or even the

breaking up of the estates to make land available for the indigent peasant. On the contrary, responsible Catholic thinking along this line follows fairly closely the action of the government itself.

The discrepancy lies mainly not on the purpose or intent, but on the actual execution of the Constitution in matters regarding land. *Acción Nacional,* for example, makes available, from time to time, statistical material which seems to indicate that the production of corn, and other basic articles has fallen off since 1910; although it may be that more corn is produced by farms for home use and does not get into the statistics. Similar figures state that the family income is lower today than it was at the time of the collapse of Díaz. A vast amount of ineptitude has unquestionably prevailed in the administration. It must be remembered, in honesty, that the Mexican Revolution was an outburst of hurricane proportions and that it did not possess the technically equipped personnel to handle such a complex problem as land redistribution. It has taken years to bring even a semblance of order out of the ravenous desire for land. Technical economists, experts in rural problems and the like have been lacking. The administration has frequently been faulty. That does not argue against the purpose nor against the need for a program which would break the back of landlordism—the curse of Mexico and the greatest stigma in its economic life. Moreover, thirty years have passed since the Revolution began. One generation is not enough to produce a full reform on a scale as vast as this. Let one but reflect on the aftermath of the French Revolution in its confiscatory measures and the long time beneficial effects that it produced in the modification of the conditions of land tenure. One need only consider the painful process in England toward a readjustment of social and economic life. Many Catholics are perfectly willing to recognize these realities. It is an absurdity to condemn the government and the Revolution on every score simply because of the anti-religious measures. The kernel of economic reform was deeprooted in the thinking of the Revolution. In a rudimentary form quite frequently, in a manner suited to arouse infinite hostility in other cases the Revolution did produce a profound change in the economic organization of Mexico's rural economy. Let us distinguish sharply between the principle and the method; between the original purpose and the often faulty administration in carrying it out.

Intelligent Catholics recognize that Mexico cannot turn back; the work has been done, for better or for worse. Incidentally, it might be added that most of Latin America will probably

have to suffer a like process sooner or later. The recent pastoral of the Archbishop of Bogotá on the matter of large land holdings is a straw in the wind. The Church certainly cannot align itself with vested interests which seek to perpetuate a system which differs only technically from serfdom. This mistake would be little short of disastrous. The Mexican Church, since the agreements of 1929 and especially under the present administration, shows no signs officially of wishing to identify its interests in the least with those who still cherish the idea that a return to the days of Don Profirio would be the solution of Mexico's ills. Utter and complete intransigence is emotional, not rational. Catholics do not have to sacrifice principles to admit that the Mexico of 1944 is a Mexico that has grown out of the Revolution, whatever the final verdict will be on its virtues or faults.

For the purposes of this brief exposition, reference may be made to an interesting polemic that took place in Catholic circles in Mexico during 1938 regarding the agrarian problem. At that time, Father José Toral Moreno of Guadalajara published in the pages of *Abside* (April, 1938), a study entitled, *La propiedad y el Estado ante el derecho natural* (Property and the State in Relation to the Natural Law). This article, plus the replies to various refutations, appeared in a brochure entitled simply *El agrarismo,* completed by another and smaller pamphlet, *El agrarismo (suplemento).* This controversy was perhaps the most significant that has taken place among Catholic intellectuals in recent years concerning the problem of land, agrarianism and the action of the government in carrying out a redistribution.

The problem originally posed was a simple one and entirely within the realm of morals. Could an *agrarista,* that is, a farmer who was offered and accepted land taken by the government from the land owners, continue as a good Catholic and receive absolution? The problem obviously was a grave one in the light of the fact that numerous Catholic peasants were granted lands which, according to one school of thought, were simply taken from their legitimate owners, and the new proprietors became in consequence the recipients of stolen property. Father Toral examined the question of property in the light of natural law. He cites the provision of Article 27 of the Constitution which grants the nation the ownership of land and the right to transmit it to private individuals to become private property. These expropriations can only be carried out in accord with the public good and through indemnity. Father Toral discusses the practical failure of the indemnity provision in terms of the collapse of confidence in the

bonds issued to cover this obligation. This does not affect his thesis that the farmer receiving such lands is not obligated to make restitution to the original owner.

Joaquín García Pimentel replied to this statement in an article called *El desastre del agrarismo*. This is based primarily on the practical and economic failure of the system, with statistics to show how faulty the administration has been. The author concludes with the statement that the citing of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* cannot be used to defend the present Mexican agrarian system. The debate went on in numerous issues of *Abside,* with considerable heat engendered in presenting the clashing points of view.

The purpose of bringing out this controversy and the character of the argument is to show that fundamentally there is a strong current of Catholic thought which is not prepared in the least to condemn *per se* the whole varied agrarian program of the Mexican government. Unfortunately there is no uniformity of criterion. It reveals, however, what has already been pointed out in other parts of this brochure that Catholic opinion is divided on many issues, that there are Catholics who are fully aware of the social significance of the times and others who refuse to budge beyond 1900 in their thinking.

The agrarian question, as has been indicated, is the root of the problem. With it is intimately linked the problem of the Indian population, divided into seventeen linguistic groups at every level of development. The Church has a long and highly honorable tradition with reference to the protection of the Indian masses. Julián Garcés and Vasco de Quiroga are noted for the policy of fair treatment and Don Vasco for creating an economy that was also a way of life. The question today, economic in its essence, often falls outside the scope of the action of the Church. The thing has become complicated by the fact that the so-called "left" and "right" have split precisely over the attitude toward the Indian. Much confusion and muddy thinking have resulted from the fact that among the extreme "right," there is a tendency to emphasize the Hispanic to the complete detriment of the Indian. On the other hand, the "left" indulges in a eulogy of the primitive Indian which makes him little short of a creature of unbounded and unmitigated virtue. In this is mixed the problem of the day: hostility to the Spain of Franco, hostility toward Europe and emotions which have their origin in political questions but which have been applied to the problem of the Indian masses.

The Church in Mexico today is prudent, sagacious and patient.

It is not hurrying. Archbishop Martinéz exemplifies, to perfection, the papal admonition of willingness to work out a harmonious solution. The Church is flourishing as it never has before. The laws are against it, but above that law, the instrumentalities of the Catholic faith have multiplied. The faith of Mexico is deep and abiding. The Virgin of Guadalupe has protected her Mexican people.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. What general opinions are held regarding the *ejidos,* or communal lands? breaking up of large estates? small privately-owned holdings? transfer of lands? What is the basis of objection of a certain number of Catholics to the agrarian laws?
2. What is responsible Catholic thinking on the subject?
3. Distinguish between the purpose and the execution of the land laws.
4. Summarize the quoted controversy on the morality of individuals accepting confiscated land from the government.
5. What is the character of the Indian population of Mexico? Why is the agrarian problem so important in connection with it?
6. What has been the traditional attitude of the Church toward the Indians? What are the two general extreme attitudes today?
7. Summarize the general situation of the Church in Mexico today.

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